Advance Praise

It is interesting, important and well grounded in both older and newer approaches to witchcraft. The general argument about witchcraft, gender, patriarchy and structural changes in the economy is also quite persuasive, though I am sure there will be quibbles. From my point of view, the book looks both original and important.

Arjun Appadurai, Professor of Anthropology, New York University

Very impressive! The authors manage to cover a lot of ground. Am really impressed by the wide scope of the book, both because of all the areas and themes covered and because of the authors' wide reading! So many literature references and ideas … I think the focus on witch-*hunts* is original and productive.

Peter Geschiere, Professor of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, author of *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust*

Witch Hunts provides an illuminating exploration of how beliefs in witches function to explain misfortunes, virtually always in the context of significant economic and social transformations. Such processes are routinely gendered, transferring land and social power usually from women to men, and thus creating or strengthening patriarchies. Innovative is that the authors take the standpoint of the victims of witch hunts in accounting for such practices and beliefs. Decades of field work in India, and archival resources from primarily Africa and early modern Europe, provide the solid evidential basis for analyses of similarities and differences between witch hunts across geographies and histories. Clearly written and well organized, this will make fascinating reading for courses in history, economics, anthropology and women's studies.

Sandra Harding, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of California at Los Angeles

A fascinating account, in horrifying detail, of the under-side of community and family life. We see patriarchy at its worst in this book which is an expert analysis of the socio-economic reasons for the treatment of women as witches, but with rays of hope on societal mechanisms which prevent or punish perpetrators. Highly recommended as it is both moving and knowledgeable.

Renana Jhabvala, Chairperson, SEWA Bharat (All India SEWA), Member, UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment in 2016–2017; Chairperson, WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing)

My impression … from an African woman's perspective: This book provides excellent analysis and new insights of critical importance to policymakers in Africa on a human rights issue affecting women and the elderly in Africa.

Sheila Oparaocha, ENERGIA

Based on field work data on India and drawing on voluminous body of works on witchcraft and witch hunts across geography and history beyond continents and across disciplines and perspectives, Kelkar and Nathan lay bare general principles that produce, reinforce and weaken witch hunts in societies. This they do by brilliant engagement with three critical factors of witchcraft belief, gender struggle and socio-economic transformation by combining the lens of political economy with cultural analysis. Large in canvas, comparative in perspective and refreshing in analysis, the book will enrich anyone interested in issues of gender, witch hunts, socio-economic transformation, political economy and indigenous peoples.

Virginius Xaxa, former Professor of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics

Witch Hunts

Witch hunts are the result of gendered, cultural, and socio-economic struggles over acute structural, economic, and social transformations in both the formation of gendered class societies and that of patriarchal capitalism. The book combines political economy with gender and cultural analysis to explain the articulation of cultural beliefs about women as causing harm, and struggles over patriarchy in periods of structural economic transformation. Starting with field data from India and South-east Asia, the analysis incorporates a large body of works on Africa, the Americas, and early modern Europe. *Witch Hunts* is a scholarly analysis of the human rights violation of women and its correction through changes in beliefs, masculinity, knowledge practices, and adaptation in structural transformation.

Govind Kelkar is a feminist scholar. She is currently Executive Director, GenDev Centre for Research and Innovation; Visiting Professor, Council for Social Development; and Distinguished Adjunct Faculty, the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok.

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WITCH HUNTS

CULTURE, PATRIARCHY, AND STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Govind Kelkar

Dev Nathan

With contributions from
Tara Ahluwalia, Jiban Behera, Durga Jha, Ajay Kumar, E. Revathi, Gunshi Soren, Sujatha Surepally, and Punam Toppo

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For Pallavi, who was part of the journeys that led to this book

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Acknowledgements

We started our work on witches in the late 1980s with a chapter, 'Women, Witches and Land Rights', in the book *Gender and Tribe* in 1991, published first by Kali for Women in India and then Zed Press in London. This work continued on and off through the 1990s, when we were in Bangkok, where Govind was teaching and setting up the Gender and Development Studies at the Asian Institute of Technology, and then more recently in the current decade in India. Through the course of this work, we have obviously accumulated various debts, which we would like to acknowledge.

One or the other of us, at times both, have continued this work as Senior Fellows at the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi; Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla; and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). Initial work on witch hunts was supported by the Norwegian development agency, NORAD in 1989. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in a project with the International Centre for Forestry Research (CIFOR) supported a number of studies on gender relations in forest societies across India, China, Thailand, and Malaysia. Our recent field work in India has been supported by the ICSSR, though the Institute for Human Development (IHD), and by the Heinrich Boll Foundation (HBF), India, from 2015 to 2017. While in Bangkok, Govind's field trips to China were supported by AIT/Gender and Development Studies, along with some support from Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and the Netherlands International Cooperation. Dev also received support from the Netherlands International Cooperation. In facilitating our research, we have been obliged at various times to Vina Mazumdar, Director, CWDS; Ravinder Kumar, Director, NMML; J. S. Grewal, Director, IIAS, Shimla; Alakh Sharma,

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Our daughter, Pallavi, has grown up as we continued our work on witch hunts. Many of our field visits would be during her school vacations, when we could both travel with her. Hearing from friends at an international school in Bangkok about their travels to holiday destinations, she would ask why we always went to what she called 'difficult places' and not have a normal holiday like others did. But she always enjoyed her trips to meet witch hunt survivors, though often frightened by what she heard, and she would help with serving tea and snacks in these meetings. Now, of course, herself a PhD candidate in Gender Studies and a visual artist, she appreciates how much she learnt in those trips to indigenous peoples in Asia. Many parts of this book were written while staying with her and our son-in-law, Darren. As she observed us reading and writing she was often worried by the frequent and even heated arguments we (Govind and Dev) had, frequently on the relative importance of property and knowledge in creating inequality!

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That is a long list of debts we have collected over the years. We can only hope that this book does justice to all that we have learnt over the years. The responsibility for opinions and interpretations expressed in the book rest solely with us.

Introduction 1

The subject of this book is the persecution of witches—of persons supposed to have supernatural powers, which they use to cause harm to other humans. Accusations leading to persecutions may be widespread or restricted; in either case, they are public performances, usually involving large numbers of people, including the accused, the accusers, those said to be able to identity witches, and many other members of the concerned communities.

The present book follows earlier work by the authors, 30 years ago, on witch hunts in the state of Jharkhand, India (Kelkar and Nathan 1991), and an analysis of the demonization of women in Yunnan, China, and Southeast Asia (Nathan, Kelkar, and Yu 1998). Both these works situated witch hunts in the context of internal gender struggles within indigenous societies. In 2016, we extended the analysis to encompass the relationship between witch hunts and the development of a modern capitalist economy, and the resultant increased inequalities and dispossessions in India (Nathan, Kelkar, and Satija, 2016).

Our analysis in this book builds on and extends this body of work, aided by some 110 case studies of witch persecution gathered by us and a group of field researchers—noted as contributors on the book's title page—between 2014 and 2016 in the five Indian states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Telangana. In addition, we build our analysis on a review of literature, court judgments, police records, interviews with police and administrative officials, and relevant civil society organizations. We also included legal analysts in our team to review and analyse court cases related to women (and men) persecuted by their communities as witches. Our study teams included both women and men who have engaged in research and praxis opposing the persecution of women as witches in their communities.

One of the two authors (Dev Nathan) has also spent much time as an activist in the trade union movement in the mineral–industrial belt of Jharkhand and central India. This was not fieldwork on this subject, but it immensely contributed to gaining an understanding of indigenous peoples' movements and their development issues. The other author (Govind Kelkar) has been part of the feminist movement in India, including that in Jharkhand and other indigenous societies in northeast India.

While our own research has been largely concentrated in several states of central India, parts of China, and Southeast Asia, we have tried to include analyses of witch persecution from other parts of the world. The literature on this subject is vast, but we have tried to include analyses from Africa, the Pacific, and Amazonia, all of which focus mainly on indigenous and other rural societies. However, witch hunts also occurred in early modern Europe and North America. These analyses are also discussed in our schema, which incorporates the phenomenon of witch persecution in indigenous, peasant, and early modern societies.

Analysis of witch hunts

Witch persecutions in historical writing about Europe have been described by the term 'witch hunts' (see Behringer 2004; Levack 2006 for contemporary uses of the term). It is an evocative term. It was chosen by Christina Larner, in preference to the *more neutral* 'prosecutions for witchcraft' (Larner 1981: 2). It fits in well with the photograph on this book's cover of a witch-finding ritual that occurred in the state of Chhattisgarh, India, in 1998 (photograph taken by the feminist artist Navjot Altaf). Both the public and performative nature of such persecutions are vividly brought out in this picture.

The literature on witch persecution can be divided into three streams. The first is the anthropological stream, best represented by the classic works of E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1976 [1935]) and the Mary Douglas collection (1970). In these studies, witchcraft and witch persecution are studied within the context of indigenous and other rural societies in order to explicate the manner in which misfortune is understood—the social role of witch accusations.

The second stream is that of post-modernist studies which investigate witchcraft issues in the context of the contact between capitalist modernism with colonial, post-colonial, and indigenous societies. Studies focused on reactions to capitalist contact range from the volumes edited by Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1999) and Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders (2001) to the studies by Peter Geschiere (1997, 2013). These include the Comaroffs' now famous depiction of witches as modernity's malcontents.

The third stream is that of witch hunts in early modern Europe, well summarized in Levack (2006), Behringer (2004), and Hutton (2017), along with numerous other studies that are referred to in different parts of this book. The term 'early modern' is surely problematic, implying the existence of the 'modern' and even the 'late modern' as historical eras. However, the purpose of these studies is to develop a 'form of periodization that is argumentative and not simply mechanical in nature' (Subrahmanyam 2011: 4). One needs to get away from the notion of necessary and immutable trajectories derived from historical data. But contrary to what the post-modernists imply, periodization does not have to be teleological.

Our study attempts to encompass all three of these time periods and combines a political economy approach with cultural analysis. A political economy approach alone cannot explain why certain conflicts take the form of witch accusations and witch hunts. For such an explanation, we will have to turn to cultural analysis. Therefore, this study takes a historical–anthropological approach where we relate the cultural aspects of witch persecution to economic, social, and political processes of change. In particular, we look at the way in which witch persecution relates to (*a*) the creation or strengthening of patriarchy within indigenous societies and (*b*) the manner in which witch hunts either support or oppose the structural transformation from subsistence to accumulative economies.

Early modern witch hunts in Europe have been studied extensively, and any summarization of its course can be open to the charge of neglecting other relevant data. While we point to areas or occurrences that do not quite fit in with the analytical framework we have derived, there will always be something that has been left out. It is always open for any work of empirical analysis to be subject to the possibility of falsification. When there are many such situations or exceptions, they will need explanation. If the exceptions overwhelm the conforming instances, then, of course, in Kuhnian fashion, a paradigm shift will be needed.

The features of early modern Europe that we are concerned with are the growth of commercial crops and changes in the structures of the economies. There are no 'strictly internal rhythms' in these developments (Subrahmanyam 2011: 4), nor were they confined to western Europe, as contributors to the *Modern Asian Studies* volume on the topic of the early modern in Asia point out in detail (1997), as also Kenneth Pomeranz (2000) and Prasannan Parthasarathi (2011).

Who is a witch?

What or who is a witch? The definition as put forward by Rodney Needham, 'one who causes harm to others by mystical means' (1978: 26), has been modified by Ronald Hutton to 'a person who uses non-physical means to cause

misfortune or injury to other humans' (2004: 421). Both these definitions, however, imply that there are people who use mystical or supernatural means to cause misfortune or harm to others. In the literature on this subject, terms such as 'mystical', 'occult', 'magical', or 'supernatural' are often used interchangeably. Of these, the term 'supernatural' is clearest, since it refers to non-natural processes that are supposed to be used. Nevertheless, we would also use all these terms interchangeably. Of these terms, 'magical' is the least appropriate, since there are forms of magic, as employed by magicians, that have nothing to do with supernatural means.

In the African literature on this subject 'the term witchcraft is used to designate the harmful employment of mystical power in all of its manifestations' (Mbiti 1970: 202). Laurenti Magesa adds that witchcraft is 'intimately bound' to the African worldview and 'influences law and the understanding of morality and ethics' (1997: 167, quoted in GechikoNyabwari and NkongeKagema 2014: 11–12).

Do such people who can cause harm through supernatural means actually exist? If they do, then one component of accusations of witchcraft would be true, namely that these people could cause harm by means of supernatural or occult powers. In order to not imply the existence of such persons, it would be preferable to have a definition without such an implication; rather, the existence of witches is something that would have to be established as a *justified belief*, a point we deal with in Chapter 2. The definition we would prefer would then be 'a witch is a person who is perceived to cause harm by supernatural means'. What is important is the belief that someone uses or has used supernatural powers to cause harm, and not whether such people actually possess such supernatural powers.

This definition would also not require us to accept that there is anything that can be called *witchcraft*. Instead, what is important is the social belief in people having supernatural powers and supposedly using them to cause harm to others. In Foucauldian terms, such a social belief is a discourse that creates its own reality, a reality reflected in the practices of witch persecutions or witch hunts. It is this dual reality—on the one side, of beliefs in persons having supernatural powers and, on the other side, the persecution of persons as supposed witches—that we have to discuss and understand. The reality that we seek to establish is not one that accepts the existence of witchcraft, but one that accepts the existence of witchcraft beliefs. The existence of these beliefs and their drastic impact on practice cannot be denied, while one may well question (as we do) whether there is anything called witchcraft. However, to reiterate, denying the existence of witchcraft does not amount to denying the existence of the belief in witchcraft as affecting social practices. At the same time, there is also the effect of witchcraft beliefs on those who

believe in it, and the tensions over the forms of structural transformation, leading to what Adam Ashforth calls 'spiritual insecurity' (2005). This too needs to be understood in order to work out ways of dealing with it.

The definition we use is similar to that proposed by Keith Thomas in his intervention in the debate between historians and anthropologists. 'I propose to restrict the term "witchcraft" to mean the employment (or presumed employment) of some supernatural means of doing harm to other people in a way that was generally disapproved of by the mass of society' (Thomas 1971: 48). Thomas adds the point about general disapproval by the mass of society. While this might actually be the case, it might be better to include such features as empirical correlates of the phenomenon, as with the other features proposed by Hutton.

Hutton (2004) identifies four more characteristics of a witch. A witch works to 'harm neigbours or kin rather than strangers' (ibid.: 422); a witch earns general disapproval (ibid.); the appearance of witches 'is not an isolated and unique event... they work in a tradition' (ibid.); and witches can be resisted by fellow humans (ibid.). These features, however, are better characterized as correlates of witches; empirically they may or may not hold. For instance, while it is generally true that witches are said to harm neighbours or kin within their own communities, there are instances, as in Papua New Guinea, where witches harm not their own but other communities (Godelier 1982; Stephen 1987). As Hutton (2017: 16) himself points out, beliefs about witches from enemy communities, rather than from within the community, are widespread in three areas: the Amazon basin, Australia, and Melanesia. Thus, the four additional features should be considered correlates that need to be empirically checked in particular instances—in which case they should not be considered part of the definition of a witch. The short statement that a witch is a person who is supposed to cause harm by supernatural means is appropriate as a definition that fits in both contemporary global and historical contexts.

As well summarized by Hutton (2017), such beliefs were prevalent among indigenous people in Africa, India, Melanesia, and the Amazon, besides Europe, in the early modern period. Even in a case where there does not seem to be any word corresponding to the English witch, there is a notion among the Dai of Yunnan, China, of persons, mainly women, who are *pippa/phi ka*, or possessors of the evil tiger spirit, with which they cause harm to other persons (Nathan, Kelkar, and Yu 1998). The social perception of causing harm by supernatural means is the defining characteristic of the witch.

With regard to the belief in witchcraft and witches in India, we find three types of communities. First, in the Hindu caste societies, there is a strong belief in witchcraft but a very limited practice of witch hunts, and that too

mainly in Hindu caste groups in areas contiguous with the central Indian forest areas, areas such as Chhattisgarh (Macdonald 2004) and Bhilwara in Rajasthan. These Hindu castes have uneven yet fully developed patriarchy. Second, the indigenous peoples, mainly in the areas of central India, stretching across Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh into the western region of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan, and into the southern regions of Andhra Pradesh and Telengana. This is the central Indian hill and plateau forest region and is the centre of witch hunts. This also extends to some indigenous peoples in northeast India, some migrated from Jharkhand or Chhattisgarh or indigenous to the area. Matrilineal communities, such as the Khasi, also have witch hunts. The third group of communities are those continuing or recently settled gatherer-hunters, such as the Birhor in central India and the Chenchu in south India, who do not seem to have any notion of witchcraft or practice of witch hunts.

The notion of witchcraft, however, sometimes goes beyond that of the use of supernatural means. In a comparative project on witchcraft in Africa, the working definition of witchcraft was 'a manifestation of evil believed to come from a human source' (Haar 2007b: 8). This goes beyond supernatural means to include the use of poison or even psychological terror, neither of which is supernatural. Among the Vagciriku of Namibia, *urodi* (witchcraft) is 'a poison and is very dangerous', while *murodi* (witch) is a person who 'possesses evil powers with the aim to harm others' (Mbambo 2007: 191, 198). In Southeast Asia and Yunnan, China, we found similar notions of persons who administer poison in addition to possessing supernatural powers. In Africa, too, the use of poison seems combined with magical powers, such as feeding on blood or removing the organs of living persons at a distance. Along with the use of poison or other knowable practices, there is a core belief in the use of supernatural powers.

However, there are also persons who are said to use supernatural powers for good, as healers. Here too there is a gendered distinction with men being regarded as the ones who use supernatural powers for good, while women are seen as using these powers for evil, as among the Fan of south Benin (Falen 2018). Further, men are perceived as acquiring these powers through study and initiation, while women are supposed to acquire these powers through food, as with the Fan, or through inheritance, as with many other communities. More important for our analysis is that those who are said to use supernatural powers for good are not subject to witch hunts; punishment and brutal torture used for confessions are reserved for those who are supposed to use supernatural powers for causing harm, who are largely women. In many communities, as among those in central India or Zimbabwe in Africa, the healers who are supposed to do good are also the witch finders.

At the same time, there is an ambiguity, since those who use their powers for good are said to be likely to turn into the opposite and use their powers for evil. Powers acquired for good are also likely to be used for evil, in which case the healers themselves may become the targets of witch hunts and the hunters could become the hunted. Since our concentration is on witch hunts, this ambiguity does not affect the analysis, since it is only on turning from good to evil that they become victims of witch hunts.

Our approach

Some of the key contemporary analyses are centred on the widespread beliefs in witchcraft (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993a; Geschiere 1997, 2013; Ashforth 2005). They concentrate on the manner in which these beliefs are supposed to be different kinds of reactions to modernity. Surprisingly, they do not pay much attention to the many victims of the widespread witch hunts and persecutions. The existence of belief in witchcraft and witch hunts does not provide equal legitimacy to both sides in the manner of alternate realities. There are surely alternate views—as the film *Rashomon* made clear a long time ago. Against the competing, alternate views of witch hunters and their victims, we position ourselves with *feminist standpoint* theory (for example, Harding and Hintikka 1983; Hartsock 1983). Whether it is gender relations or class relations, there are alternate views—those of the privileged and those of the under-privileged. Knowledge is socially situated, but it is the social situation of the marginalized in the particular relation being considered whose standpoint allows one to develop a critical theory that can overcome the contradictions or relations being considered.

The standpoint of witch hunt survivors will allow the development of such a theory and approach that can contribute to overcoming witch hunts and persecutions. This difference in standpoints is reflected in our ethnographic work. While Geschiere and others concentrate on ethnographic accounts of witchcraft beliefs, we concentrate on the accounts of the women who have been the usual victims of witch hunts. In fact, it is our conversations with these women and their families that led us to the theorization reflected in this book.

We utilize the standpoint of victims of witch hunts for two reasons. One is political, in that it provides the starting point for a more just social order (Hartsock 1997: 373). The other is epistemological, in that it allows not for a supposed 'true' but for a provisionally 'less false' (ibid.: 387) understanding of the phenomena of witch hunts.

There is a justified call that 'the interpretation of cultural forms must begin with the people, not the ethnographer' (Apter 1993: 223). However,

the people, the community, or the society do not have just one voice. Nor is there just one discourse—that of witchcraft beliefs. There is also the discourse of the practice of witch hunts and a discourse based on the voices of those (mainly women) persecuted as witches. Both together constitute what may be called the witch complex. While we deal with both sides, with the witchcraft discourse and the practices of witch persecutions and witch hunts, we adopt the standpoint of the oppressed, mainly the women persecuted in this discourse.

In addition, there is the question of whether an analysis that begins with the acceptance of belief in witchcraft reinforces such beliefs. This proposition is supported by a point that Geschiere makes about Pentecostalism, where he says that it 'reinforces the "witchcraft" it claims to eradicate' (2017: 282).

It is refreshing to note the account of Joseph Tonda, from Congo, which starts from the standpoint of the victims of witch hunts. Having been declared a witch at the age of 5, Tonda writes: 'It is both as a researcher and a member of hundreds of African families that go through this experience that my revolt against this whole social phenomenon unfolds in my research today' (2017: 58).

Some other, but not many, African anthropological or academic works too begin with witch hunts and persecutions, rather than with witchcraft beliefs. It is unfortunate that the grossness, the brutality, and, often, the murderousness of the attacks, aspects of the human rights abuses involved in contemporary witch hunts, have been largely subsumed in discussing witchcraft practices. Gerrie ter Haar points out that there is a connection between the two: '... it is precisely because they often devote insufficient attention to the moral aspects of witchcraft that academic studies may risk contributing to the stigmatization of people who are accused of being witches, with at times fatal consequences' (2007b: 15).

The reason for the neglect of the nature and processes of witch persecutions is possibly related to the preoccupation with the ideology of witchcraft beliefs and their meaning, rather than the practical consequences of these beliefs, manifested as witch persecutions and witch hunts. An obsession with meaning can blind us to the murderous consequences of beliefs. Helen Macdonald urges Indian researchers of witchcraft to '… explore meanings as opposed to structures of witchcraft …' (2017: 16). The point is not to set up meaning in opposition to structure but to combine or relate the two. The meaning of witchcraft is not just confined to the content of the witchcraft accusations, usually that of causing illness or bringing some kind of misfortune. But as Macdonald herself points out, there are factors which influence witchcraft accusations, such as 'egalitarian or hierarchical relations, wealth distribution, conflict resolution, or social change or its inhibition' (Macdonald 2004: 22).

Can an analysis of witch hunts be complete without bringing in these factors, which relate to structure and people's positions within them, for example, as widows possessing land that the patrilineages think should come to men?

It is one thing to ask for a movement away from a mono-causal analysis, which is something we do in this book. It is yet another thing to abandon factors in witch accusations, which are admittedly present, and only look at meaning in terms of, say, supposedly causing illness or bringing misfortune. Our attempt in this study is to engage with both meaning and socio-economic or structural transformations. In fact, we emphasize the role of socio-economic transformations, rather than static structures, in witch hunts.

One of the contributors to the case studies in this book, Punam Toppo, is the granddaughter of a woman who had been accused of being a witch and driven out of her village in Jharkhand, India. Discussions with her and with the many women (and a few men) persecuted as supposed witches in different states of India and China have made us sensitive to the need to bring their voices into discussions on the witch complex.

Comparison across time periods and geographies

However, can one combine current global contexts in the indigenous and other rural societies of India, Southeast Asia, southwest China, Melanesia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Amazonia with the historical context of early modern Europe and New England in the United States? The fact that a common definition applies in all these contexts should show that the concept of the witch and possibly the witch hunt has existed across these geographical and historical spaces. However, there is a long and continuing debate about the comparison between witch hunts in indigenous societies and early modern Europe. The historian Keith Thomas' intervention in the debate was explicitly titled 'The Relevance of Social Anthropology to the Historical Study of English Witchcraft' (1970: 47–79).

In the third edition of his study *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (2006), Brian Levack included a chapter on 'witch hunting after the trials' with material from contemporary witch hunts in Africa. In this, he cautions against overdoing the comparison between the two. For one, he says, the European witch hunts had a belief not just in magical practices but also in diabolism, the worship of the devil. The other reason is that the European witch hunts had the sanction of the state and the judicial system, while the African witch hunts do not have the sanction of the state and are more in the nature of lynching—extra-judicial killings or executions by a mob. We should point out that witch hunts among indigenous and other people in

India can have both these characteristics—some include charges of deviant worship, and in all cases the punishments are illegally enforced by a mob or self-appointed/community courts.

Is devil-worship an additional charge to that of the use of magic to cause harm? This would need further investigation in the European texts and records. Levack points out that the comparison with Africa works better in the case of English witch trials, which were generally focused on proving the possession of magical powers and less on devil-worship (2006: 303). If the charge of the use of supernatural and mystified means to cause harm is sufficient to label someone a witch, then the charge of devil-worship over-determines this labelling. Are there substantial numbers of witches who were charged with devil-worship but not with causing harm to others? One would have to establish that empirically in order to argue for non-congruence between contemporary witch hunts and those in early modern continental Europe.

In addition, it should be pointed out that indigenous witch beliefs often include charges of witches being in communion with evil spirits of one kind or another. This is not the same as the concept of the devil as found in the Abrahamic religions, but there is some resonance between the two. Again, the difference between judicial and illegal execution needs to be noted, but does it change the nature of the social problem of witch accusations or witch hunts? Indigenous farming societies often have proto-structures involving the headman and the witch finder (*ojha*) in central India, almost always a man. In customary practices of witch hunting, these quasi-officials lead the identification and punishment of witches. In addition, these indigenous societies also sanction personal or non-official settlement of disputes, without relying on the third-party procedures of established states. They also have systems of customary law (see Archer 1984 on Santhal law), which include rules of inheritance. Indigenous and peasant societies have forms of social contracts which are often quite different from capitalist or other non-indigenous social contracts, but they are not Hobbesian pre-contract societies in a supposed state of nature.

While Levack cautions against overdoing the comparisons between early modern Europe and contemporary indigenous societies, there have been objections to the very idea of comparison. In Douglas' anthology on *Witchcraft Accusations* (1970), while Thomas examined the parallels between these two kinds of societies, historians of the New England witch hunts dismissed the idea of comparison, arguing, in a sense, for a sort of European exceptionalism, rejecting comparisons, 'claiming that "primitive" social groups of Sub-Saharan Africa bore little resemblance to the more complex cultures of Europe' (Hutton 2004: 414). In the Douglas volume, T. O. Beidelman held

that witchcraft was being used as a label for 'social phenomena that differ radically from society to society' (1970: 351).

With the rise of post-modernism, while reviewing the anthropology of religion and magic, Hildred Geertz (1975) held that Thomas had used categories derived from British history to compare disparate phenomena across time periods and geographical spaces. She called for recognizing the particularity of the culture being studied and pointed to the cultural basis of the analytical categories employed. She questioned whether there was such a thing as 'magic'. In reply, Thomas conceded that much historical work does not 'easily lend itself to cross-cultural comparison' (1975: 107) but argued for the existence of the notion of 'the deliberate production (or attempted production) of physical effects or the gaining of knowledge by means which were regarded as occult or supernatural' (ibid.: 94). We would like to change this characterization of witchcraft, preferring to remain on the plane of beliefs about witches as people who use supernatural and mystified practices to cause harm. These beliefs have existed across time periods and geographies as we will see in the various literatures and in this book as well.

Attempts at comparing witch hunts

More recently, there has been acceptance of the possibility—or even necessity—of comparing witch persecutions or witch hunts across time and space. Andrew Sanders' *A Deed Without a Name* (1995) put together, as in the sub-title, 'The Witch in Society and History'. George Clement Bond and Diane Ciekawy brought together 'Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges' in their edited book *Witchcraft* (2001). Wolfgang Behringer combined the two in *Witches and Witch-Hunts* (2004), while Nick Koning attempted an interdisciplinary explanation in his article 'Witches and Witch Hunts' (2013). More recently, Ronald Hutton came out with his magisterial survey *The Witch* (2017), in which he dealt with 'A History of Fear: From Ancient Times to the Present'.

All these volumes craft a manner of comparative history, drawing out what is common and different in witch hunts across time and geography. Some of them deal with not just the *how* but also the *why* of witch hunts. The comparative approach does not have to fall into essentialist or binary (modern versus backwardness) categorization. It can also be one of comparisons *of*, rather than comparisons *to* (Levine 2014). Thus, in studying witch hunts, we do not need to set up a hierarchy with either European or indigenous societies at the top, against which the other will be compared. We can both interrogate indigenous societies on the basis of standards or values of accumulation set

by the development of capitalism and also carry out the reverse interrogation of capitalism by indigenous standards or values of equality, as also argued for Eurasian history by Pomeranz (2000).

All the approaches listed in the preceding paragraphs are comparisons. One cannot escape comparison if we are to make any kind of analysis. Even the Comaroffs (1993a) end up or, shall we say, begin with a comparison of 'Modernity's Malcontents', where various forms of the witchcraft phenomenon and ritual are brought into a comparative and common framework as being manifestations of malcontent with modernity. This ignores the differences that exist between some manifestations being of a levelling type and others being of an accumulating type, to use Geschiere's terms (1997), where the former could be described as a form of malcontent, while the latter is certainly one of using witch accusations as a form of support to accumulation. Ignoring these differences, all the case studies in the Comaroffs' book are brought together under the rubric of modernity's malcontents, a comparison of the broadest type possible. Other than just describing cases, one at a time, any attempt to put them together, even with just an introduction to a volume, will necessarily involve some comparison, whether implicitly in the Comaroffs' modernity's malcontents or explicitly in Geschiere's 'intimacy and trust' (2013). Ours is an explicit comparison across geographies and time.

Comparative history has one more hurdle to cross—that is of not treating current constructs, such as the nation, as adequate boundaries of analysis. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam insists, 'Nationalism has blinded us to the possibility of connection... [W]e not only compare from within our boxes, but spend time and effort to transcend them, not by comparison alone but by seeking out the at times fragile threads that connected the globe, even as the globe came to be defined as such' (1997: 761–62).

Therefore, comparative history also needs to be connected history.

Connection as articulation

What, however, is the nature of connection? We utilize the stream of analysis which links connections between production systems as articulation, a suggestion recently put forward by Geschiere (2017) in the context of witchcraft analysis. Articulation (Wolpe 1980) was developed to show the links between the kinship-based reserve economies and the industrial-mining South African complex, where the former supplied labour to the latter. This was generalized by Claude Meillassoux (1981) to discuss rural–urban links in industrialization. Many of the indigenous peoples involved in witch hunting practice have been in articulated connections with their neighbouring statist economies and also the rest of the world. However, economies carry

out exchanges not only of labour power and products but also of cultures and ideas. Thus, the concept of articulation needs to be extended from the economic sphere to that of culture and ideas. Ideas of women as evil may well have spread from statist societies to indigenous peoples in India or China. They may also have a spread with Christianity along with colonialization in Africa or Asia. Articulation, however, exists not only between two systems or modes of production, but also within a socio-economic system. Stuart Hall (1985) used the concept of articulation to argue for the need to establish, not assume, links between, say, culture and other spheres of the socio-economic system, such as the political sphere or production relations.

In looking at connections as articulations, it is necessary to note that interaction can be a two-way affair—not just statist to indigenous societies but also the other way around. However, articulations always involve power relations, which are involved not only in economic exchanges but also in cultural exchanges.

Looking at articulation may also help one get over the conundrum of internal–external relations. The result of articulation is the product of both internal and external relations and their interaction. One needs to look at both initial conditions (which may differ from place to place) and external connections. Even if the external connections are the same, the resultant outcome is the joint product of the articulation of both external relations and initial conditions, not just of any one of them.

We mentioned earlier that we carry out a comparison of or between, rather than a comparison to. In this way, we are able to bring multiple standards into a discussion and an interrogation of each other. However, is there any context in which we place these comparisons? It is best to state this clearly instead of letting it remain in the background as an implicit assumption. First, we make comparisons with Europe and America in order to see how the analyses of witch hunts there helped us understand those in contemporary indigenous societies in India and other parts of Asia, Africa, Amazonia, and the Pacific. In this, we invert Hutton's approach—he looked at the anthropological literature to see how that could help understand witch hunts in early modern Europe. We look at early modern Europe to see how those witch hunts help us understand contemporary witch hunts in indigenous and peasant societies.

The context

The indigenous and peasant societies in India and Africa, as also the indigenous societies in South and Central America, presently live at income levels that are below the material bases for a reasonably fulfilling life in the contemporary world. According to Richard Layard's analysis of the

relationship between per capita income and well-being, there is an increase in perceived well-being up to the level of USD 20,000 per capita per year, but not beyond that (Layard 2005; Marglin 2018). Average incomes in countries like India and in most countries in Africa are below that level; incomes of indigenous and peasant communities in these regions are certainly below that. Therefore, we think that growth is necessary for these indigenous societies and countries of Africa. While one may argue that the high-income countries of Europe and North America as also Japan and a few other countries do not require growth for an increase in well-being (see papers in Gerber and Raina 2018), that is certainly not the case with indigenous and peasant societies that are subject to witch hunts. While we do have an economic standard for the analysis of socio-economic processes and witch hunts, we do not have any standards for a socio-economic and gendered structure that could help achieve this economic standard.

A word about terminology. We do not use the word 'tribe', as that is taken to connote a 'society that lacks positive traits of modern society and thus constitutes a simple, illiterate and backward society' (Xaxa 1999: 3589). Instead, we use the term 'indigenous societies' to refer to those communities that, at the time of colonization in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, were outside of or loosely connected with the large state organizations. In general, indigenous societies were of the segmentary variety, with each segment, organized as lineages, being more or less like any other with limited proto, supra-village authorities. Their methods of production were generally centred around hoe-based agriculture, along with some plough-based agriculture (of paddy or wet rice cultivation), together with gathering, hunting, and some trade. However, these segmentary systems embodied various forms of inequality and gender inequality in particular. The term 'peasant societies' is used to refer to those which were subsumed under state systems, such as those of the Ashanti and Zulu kingdoms of west and south Africa or even the peasant villages of early modern Europe.

In analysing witch hunts, we specify three types of relations and changes in them. One is that of culture, the symbolic realm of good and evil and its manifestation in gendered patriarchal processes. This is also related to the fear of certain people (mainly women) in most of the cultures considered in this book, who can use supernatural practices to harm others. The second is that of processes of change in gender relations and of gender struggles in the creation or re-creation of patriarchy, defined as the domination of men over resources, such as land, and having decision-making power in all critical spheres of the economy and society. The third is that of structural transformation or major socio-economic transformation, often brought about by the spread of trade and the market economy. In fact, the economic

transformations brought about by trade and production for trade have often set off socio-economic transformations and witch hunts. An analysis of the articulation of culture and beliefs and fear of persons causing harm, of processes of change in gender relations, and of processes of socio-economic transformation is an exercise that we attempt in this book.

By utilizing three concepts for analysis (the culture of evil, gender struggles, and structural transformations) across both time and geographies, there should be a double effect. One is to de-exoticize witch hunts in Africa or in indigenous India for that matter. The other is to remove European exceptionalism. Witch hunts in all the three groups of societies—contemporary Africa and indigenous India, along with other indigenous areas in the Pacific and Amazonia, and early modern Europe—are understood and, hopefully, explained through a common framework of analysis. All these regions are made part of a global history of witch hunts and thus become neither isolated nor exceptions.

Our endeavour follows the effort of Geschiere (2013) who utilizes the two concepts of intimacy and trust to analyse witchcraft across geographies and time periods. In a sense, we try to elaborate the conditions under which trust breaks down in relations between neighbours as structural transformations take place, including those related to patriarchy, and a society's transition from subsistence to market-based economy is manifested in conflicts of various types, including between norms and systems of moral economy. Such works, as pointed out by Michael Bailey (2015) in a review of Geschiere, would contribute to Dipesh Chakrabarty's call to 'provincialize Europe' (2000), understood as explaining witch hunts in early modern Europe as a concatenation of the three explanatory variables we use in our analysis, which are also applicable to other parts of the world. Thus, we have neither European nor African exceptionalism, but comparable historical trends.

The challenge that Marshal Sahlins posed about the analysis of culture in relation to historical change—'not merely to know how events are ordered by culture, but how, in that process, the culture is reordered' (1981: 8)—still exists. The post-modern turn has been important in bringing reflexivity into social analyses. This is a re-introduction since reflexivity is there in Marx's 'Theses on Feuerbach', though these are usually left aside in most of what is called Marxist analysis, including some of our own earlier work. While our research concentrates on the manner in which political economy conflicts around the witch hunt phenomenon are ordered by cultures that understand misfortune as being caused *by* someone, we also look at the manner in which cultures or social norms change.

The book begins by examining witchcraft persecution as part of the history of those whom Erich Wolf named *people without history* (1982) and analyses what that means. We look at what witch persecution within indigenous

societies can tell us about the struggle to establish male dominance in different spheres of life—economic, political, cultural and ritual—or patriarchy. This is an attempt at anthropological history, largely using material from the writings of European military conquerors, missionaries, and administrators in parts of central India along with later ethnographic material and our own fieldwork. We utilize these writings to highlight the existence of the phenomenon of witch hunts before clear capitalist contact. The Comaroffs (1999: xxviii) do acknowledge the prior existence of witch persecution but do not accord it any importance or significance. Our approach is to utilize these early sources to understand the nature of gender struggles in indigenous societies.

The next area of analysis is that of the development of witchcraft accusations and the persecution of people in the course of the growth of market-based economies. With increasing inequality, processes of dispossession and accumulation were often understood in cultural and moral terms carried over from subsistence economies into economies of accumulation. In these interactions, we do not see the indigenous reaction as 'the passive product of exogenous forces' (Eves 2000: 454), but examine the manner in which cultural norms are carried over and modified in the new context over time. Gender relations are also reconstituted in the course of these struggles and transformations. The analysis of contemporary witch hunts in indigenous and peasant communities is then compared to those in early modern Europe and the United States.

About the book

Belief in witchcraft or the malign actions of witches is a necessary condition for the occurrence of witch hunts. After the Introduction, Chapter 2 deals with the cultural and epistemological aspects of such beliefs. Such beliefs start from the position of attributing causation for misfortunes or seeming accidents not to some abstract economic principle or other component of a 'system', but seek to identify the humans responsible for these negative developments. This is a valid point—one worth keeping in mind when all that occurs is reified as being the result of some kind of objective system, usually a socio-economic one, neglecting the human actors involved.

However, witchcraft beliefs go beyond such causes in attributing misfortunes to the actions of humans using supernatural powers. Such attribution of supernatural powers is a feature of numerous cultures. We discuss these beliefs in the context of not just contemporary indigenous societies in central India, but also Africa and early modern Europe, the three main sites of our analysis. Being part of a cultural system is not sufficient to accept any belief as a *justified* belief. This epistemological question is dealt

with in Chapter 2, with the conclusion that the epistemology is flawed since, in the first place, it is not based on evidence that can be produced. Such evidence is supposed to be a Euro-American or Western epistemological requirement, not necessarily accepted in Africa or Asia. However, what can we say about the process of establishing that certain actions have occurred on account of witchcraft? This process of knowing who is a witch is primarily or even entirely based on confessions, usually coerced through torture of the accused. Consequently, on both the grounds of lack of evidence and of the non-acceptability of a procedure based on torture, we conclude that the epistemology of witchcraft is flawed and based on human rights violations.

However, witchcraft beliefs do exist and they have material consequences. Chapter 2 also looks at how witchcraft functions as an explanation. At this level, it usually diverts attention from the non-proximate causes of misfortune, such as the employers of migrant workers. Instead of seeing witchcraft as an explanation of misfortune, we see its importance as an often vivid metaphor for exploitation. Beliefs in the existence of witchcraft in conjunction with the stresses and deprivations of major socio-economic or structural transformations lead to what has been called a situation of spiritual insecurity (Ashforth 2005), a situation that needs to be dealt with. How spiritual insecurity can be dealt with is something we examine in the last chapter.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with our case studies from field work by the authors and co-researchers in different parts of India, ranging from Odisha, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh in eastern India to Rajasthan in the west and Telangana in the south. Chapter 3 begins with a table summarizing data from the Indian Crime Records Bureau on murders attributed to witch accusations from 2001 to 2016. We then take up our case studies (in all cases names have been changed, except in the case of Haribai, who has become quite well known for her successful resistance) and arrange them first on the basis of the relationship between the victims and their accusers. This is followed by a categorization of cases on the basis of the types of persecutions involved in these incidents. The persecutions ranged from torture to extract confessions to public humiliation, social boycott, and sexual and physical violence, leading up to murder in many cases. Being expelled from the village or being made to pay a large fine is also common. Chapter 3 ends with some cases where the accused successfully resisted the accusations.

In Chapter 4, the cases are arranged on the basis of the background factors leading to the witch accusations and persecutions. These background factors are important in illustrating the dynamics of socio-economic change and reactions to these changes. The factors identified in the witch hunts include the seizure of women's land and other property, jealousy, asking for dues, women's assertion of independence and initiatives taken by them, resisting

sexual predation, unconventional religious practices, and causing illness and misfortune. Causing illness or misfortune is, of course, a common factor in all witch hunts. Added to them are factors such as jealousy. However, there were some cases in which no major background factor has been recorded. These cases have been listed under the causing of illness or misfortune factor. Additional inquiry may well reveal some other background factors in those accusations.

The next section of three chapters, Chapters 5, 6, and 7, deals with the connection between witch hunts and patriarchy. Chapter 5 deals with this in the context of indigenous people in central India—mainly the Santhal, Munda, and Oraon. Using both ethnographic material from the early colonial period of the nineteenth century and our own field work in the 1980s and again in 2015–17, we try to reconstruct the manner in which witch hunts were part of the creation of patriarchy.

The myth of the origin of witchcraft among the Santhal people reflects the struggle over power between women and men, with men seizing power that women originally possessed. The categorization of women as witches and men as witch finders was crucial in this myth of male power. As in other indigenous societies, women were 'evil' and, therefore, actual or potential witches. In conjunction with this categorization, there was the denial of women's rights to land, establishing the supremacy of the patrilineage. Witch accusations also played a role in enforcing norms with regard to patrilocality, control over expenditure, and even over women's bodies. Women could also be punished for taking the initiative or asserting their voice. Importantly, women were prohibited from many areas of the ritual sphere, under threat and fear of being denounced as witches if they did transgress those norms. The ritual sphere is established as a hierarchically superior form of knowledge, prohibited for women; if they do acquire this superior knowledge, they are denounced as witches.

In Chapter 6, this trajectory of gender struggles, combined with witch persecution, is placed in the context of an overall creation of patriarchy. In this process, we see a key factor being the monopolization of the sphere of hierarchically superior knowledge of ritual. This itself occurs in the course of the adoption of the plough instead of the hoe in agriculture, with the former becoming a male farming system while the latter was a female farming system. Such struggles are also seen in the conflicts between matrilineal and patrilineal kinship and inheritance systems. An additional factor, important in the shift from matriliny to patriliny among Bantu-speaking peoples in Africa, was the growing importance of cattle rearing, which was the sphere of men. Were there witch struggles in these transitions? With examples such as the Dai and Mosuo from Yunnan, China, and the Ashanti from Ghana, we

see some glimpses of struggles over women being denounced as witches or as evil in matrilineal societies undergoing change from matriliny. There is more than one trajectory in the creation of patriarchy.

Chapter 7 deals with witch hunts and the re-creation of patriarchy in the context of early modern Europe from around 1400 to 1700 CE. There has been much debate about whether witch hunting was woman-hunting in that period. After going through the debate, our conclusion is that it was woman-hunting in the sense that any woman could be denounced as a witch, while only special categories of men, such as those with prior professions related to spirits or those who became better off, could be victims of witch hunts. Witch hunting targeted any woman but only some men in early modern Europe. Taking up witch hunts in early modern Europe, the base of the analysis shifts from patriarchy by itself to the gendered processes of socio-economic transformation of modernity and capitalism.

The next section, of Chapters 8 and 9, deals with witch hunts in the context of structural transformations, a factor that brings together early modern Europe with indigenous peoples in Asia, South America, the Pacific, and Africa in current times. Chapter 8 deals with witch persecution in the new economic context of capitalist economies and transformations. There are structural transformations, particularly in the shift to an economy where the motto is 'Accumulate, accumulate!', as Marx put it, in comparison with all other forms of economic organization based on some form of production for use.

Chapter 8 shows that the new economic organization brings not just new forms of inequality but also conflicts between old and new forms of moral economy. The moral economy of sharing of surpluses is contrasted with the capitalist imperative of accumulation. There is a reaction of levelling, which is a matter of dispossessing those who have become better off. This comes in the form of jealousy of those who do better, who are then denounced as witches. It also comes in the form of denouncing those who accumulate but do not share, 'the neighbor who does not give' (Briggs 1998: xx) as a witch—a denunciation not of accumulation itself but of the moral economy of accumulation. Conversely, there is also the attempt of those who are better off to deny the entitlements that existed under the earlier moral economy, whether it is the denial of caste-based entitlements in India or the denunciation of 'the neighbor who asks' (ibid.) as a witch in Europe. An interesting analysis of Sierra Leone points out that the incidence of witch accusations is low in villages where either the old communitarian norms or the new individualist, accumulative norms hold sway, while they are most intense where both economic systems exist together.

Chapter 8 ends with the formation of capitalism seen as the process of primary accumulation (modifying Marx's phrase, 'primitive accumulation'),

which included the accumulation of wealth as money and the separation of workers from the means of production. The analysis of England shows a connection between witch hunts and the process of enclosure of the commons. This itself, along with the denial of earlier entitlements, pushed forward the separation of petty producers from the means of production and thus made them wage labourers. However, besides these twin processes, there was another feature of primary accumulation which entirely involved women. This was as reproducers of labour power in a generational sense. As the repopulation of Europe after the Black Death became a matter of state policy, the witch hunt was the method to reduce or even eliminate women's control over the birth process and to reinforce and devalue their position as merely reproducers.

Chapter 9 continues with the analysis of witch hunts in the gendered process of socio-economic transformation in Africa and also brings in the Americas and Papua New Guinea. Witch hunts were part of anti-colonial uprisings in Tanzania. While in a number of countries women were regarded as witches by sexual definition, in a number of other countries witches could be both women and men. In the largely unorganized economic sectors, whether rural or urban, women became economically important in petty trading, leading to challenges to masculinity. This chapter also looks at instances in Africa where witch hunting became state or judicial policy or, if not undertaken by the state, at least condoned by the state.

The imaginaries of witchcraft changed or took on new meanings. Instead of death being caused by witchcraft, the new imaginaries stressed zombies, the living dead, whose labour was used for accumulation. In South America, the mine owners became the new devils, an expression of alienated labour under capitalism. In Papua New Guinea, where pre-colonial witch accusations were often against other communities and a part of warfare, with the growth of capitalist accumulation and urban centres, the witch accusations now turned inwards against those members of the community who had jobs and did not share with their rural relatives. In urban South Africa too, witch accusations were transformed from being directed at community members or neighbours to any woman who was better off.

The analysis in this book has looked at three variables—witchcraft beliefs, gender struggles, and structural or overall socio-economic transformation—as factors leading to witch hunts. This explanation is not mono-causal. While witch hunting as the hunting of women as witches may be over-determined by this analysis, it also allows us to account for variations such as men being targets for specific reasons and in some places. Chapter 10 concludes this analysis in terms of articulation. Articulation can occur between different spheres of social existence, such as between the ideology of witchcraft beliefs and gender relations. Articulation can also occur between different economic

systems, such as between those of subsistence and production for use with that of capitalist accumulation.

Chapter 11 concludes the discussion as policy enabler, raising the questions: how can the communities and states deal with witch hunts? There is a reflexivity in witchcraft beliefs and witchcraft discourses—they only reinforce the witchcraft beliefs, while the actions on these beliefs have disastrous consequences. In discussing policy we start from the position that without bringing human rights issues into the discourse, one cannot fashion a policy to end witch hunts. Various points about the difference between beliefs and action on the basis of beliefs, the growing demand for evidence in supposed supernatural action, and the role of laws are all discussed in the concluding chapter. It is also necessary to take account of the spiritual crisis created by the articulation of witchcraft beliefs with the major socio-economic transformation that can be called a structural change. A number of policy measures to reduce spiritual and social insecurity are discussed—the role of land and asset distribution in the unmediated names of women, a minimum income as social security in reducing the stresses of change, possible forms of accumulation that do not involve dispossession, the fashioning of a new masculinity in place of patriarchy, and that of fostering methods of thinking that already exist as an alternative to witchcraft-based explanations.

In an early paper, we characterized major socio-economic changes as being civilizational, in the sense that what we are seeing is the replacement of one kind of civilization by another (Nathan and Kelkar 2003). In this book we are using the term 'structural transformation' to refer to broad changes in the economy (in both the technology and organization of production), social structures (including gender and class structures), and political systems (such as the change from chiefdoms to states with a bureaucracy and standing army). Such a structural transformation, which could also include changes in explanatory schemes, is very likely to be accompanied by spiritual insecurity. In the concluding chapter we return to the manner in which the spiritual crises of structural transformation could be handled.

CULTURE

Culture and the Epistemology of Belief in Witchcraft

2

In the Introduction, we defined a witch as *a person who is perceived to cause harm by supernatural, mystical means*. For such beliefs to result in witch hunts, we need three conditions: first, the belief that there are human beings who cause harm to others; second, the idea that such harm can be caused by those who have or acquire supernatural means and who can use these supernatural means; and, third, that there is collective/community acceptance of action against witches, that is, persecution of witches or witch hunts. In the latter part of the book, we will go through these three conditions and see how they are manifested in indigenous societies in India, in Africa, and also in early modern Europe.

The view of witchcraft as being the social explanation for misfortune or suffering can be looked into at various levels. One can look at witchcraft beliefs as an epistemology, a way through which the world is known. We also bring the human rights issue into the discussion of witch persecutions.

Causing harm through supernatural means

E. E. Evans-Pritchard succinctly posed the question regarding what we would call an accident of a crumbling wall falling on a particular person, 'Why now? Why me?' (1935, 1976: 25). As he pointed out, the answer in finding a witch who had used magic to cause harm does not rule out real, that is, physical or biological, causes; rather, it 'is superimposed on them, and gives to social events their moral value' (1976: 25). The entire exercise of attributing misfortune to witches was labelled as the beliefs of a 'primitive' type of mind existing in the cosmology of supposed 'pre-rational' people (J. Green 1977: 197). Obviously,

we now reject the characterization of a primitive, pre-rational mind, but a whole stream of thought distinguished such supposedly pre-rational beliefs from those of rational, modern peoples.

There, however, is an important point in which the moderns can learn from indigenous beliefs. This is in the rejection of a fetishism that substitutes things for people and does not see the role of the relations between people in causing what seem to be accidents. For instance, industrial accidents are seen if not as the hand of a wrathful god, then as the inevitable result of industrial processes. Whether it is the frequent cutting off of fingers in heavy metal presses in the auto components industry or the Bhopal, India, gas disaster of 1979 in which tens of thousands died, these tragic events are seen as accidents. These accidents, however, are a consequence of industrial processes and can be addressed within a calculation of risk or the probability of an accident occurring. In line with this thinking, the English Workmen's Compensation Act of 1887 defined some workplace accidents as not 'really' accidents, but arising from the negligence of employers (J. Green 1997: 197). This allows for the attribution of blame, even if the accident is not intended. The Bhopal gas leak was not intended by Union Carbide. But did the company's actions, both active and passive, bring about the gas leak, injuries, and the death of thousands? Probabilistic calculations of risk do not end culpability; they only allow insurance agencies to carry out business by combining the risk of many.

At a more general level, the economists' tendency to attribute economic fortunes or misfortunes to the laws of supply and demand, to the impersonal workings of a market mechanism, ends up with no one being responsible. But markets have actors, and there are traders and other operators, even in relatively remote areas. There is culpability in price gouging or taking advantage of critical shortages. Even in ultra-modern situations, there is a moral condemnation of taking advantage of crises, such as in the case of surge pricing as demand for mobility shoots when people try to leave the location of a terrorist attack, as did occur in the aftermath of the Paris stadium attack in 2016.

In the lead-up to the Great Recession of 2008, there were not only ill-founded policies that pushed mortgage debt beyond safe levels but also the actions of hedge fund operators and purveyors of financial securities who both benefited from the financial developments and contributed to the crisis. As against a reification of the market, the indigenous approach to emphasizing the social nature of misfortunes is well founded. Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky (1983) had suggested that there is a curious parallel between modern thinking and indigenous thinking that held all deaths to have a cause.

All of the actors mentioned above can be said to have contributed to the Great Recession.

At the same time, one cannot attribute culpability to any and every event or misfortune, nor to particular individuals. For instance, in a malaria-prone area, such as the forested areas of indigenous peoples often are, one person, and not her neighbour, becoming a victim to the deadly falciparum malaria cannot be considered the responsibility of the neighbour. Or the poorly grown crops on one field that is not well tended cannot be attributed to the machinations of those who tend their fields somewhat better. One may seek an explanation for misfortunes but not in the shape of a non-existent supernatural explanation, such as in their being caused by women by the use of 'magical' powers. However, recent studies, as pointed out in Hutton (2017: 39), confirm that there can be death from suggestion. So, should there not be punishment for such practice of suggestion as supernatural? And what about respect for various traditions?

Following a spate of murders of women as witches in post-Apartheid South Africa, the Ralushai Commission was appointed to enquire about the issue. The Commission in its report held that beliefs in witches and their practice of witchcraft were part of what they called an African understanding of reality (Ralushai Commission 1998: 192). John Mbiti (1970: 9–10) asserts that witchcraft is a traditional religious concept and that it continues to dominate the background of African people. The Commission also argued that witchcraft should be identified as a crime and dealt with as such. This was done in Cameroon with an anti-witchcraft law, under which suspected witches can be tried. The above suggestions and actions were put forward as righting a wrong done by colonialism, which outlawed the persecution of so-called witches.

Within these cultures, witch persecution or killing is understood to be a moral action, an action necessary to preserve the moral fibre of the society. Being understood as a moral action, the perpetrators sometimes make no attempt to hide their role in the actions. There have been cases where the perpetrators have gone to surrender themselves after killing the supposed witches. This can be seen as an understanding of their action as being morally justified, an action to support the moral fabric of their society, bringing back into discussion the nowadays neglected Evans-Pritchard analysis of witchcraft as a stabilizing influence on the social and moral system.

Peter Geschiere argues against the very use of the term 'witchcraft', which draws on the opposition between good and evil, and instead uses the term 'occult power' (1997: 12). While agreeing that diverse traditions and epistemologies need to be respected, is the belief in supernatural causation a

justified belief? A rationalist position would reject any form of supernatural causation. In addition, there is the unavoidable question of ethics in both witch hunts and the analysis of witch hunts. The ethical question cannot be avoided in the analysis of witchcraft. We now look at the cultures within which witch persecutions are justified, first in central India, then in early modern Europe, and in Africa.

Culture and witch persecution in India

Can we identify a culture and associated beliefs that relate to and justify witch persecutions? We make a synthetic account of such a culture from among the indigenous peoples of central India, putting forward the hypothesis that something similar is likely to hold among indigenous peoples in other parts of the world. For Africa, Adam Ashforth (2001, 2005) puts forward a similar synthetic belief system.

The most important proximate events that usually bring forth witchcraft accusations are those of severe or chronic illness and premature death. As our case studies across central India show, death or illness was a proximate factor in all of them. High fever, broken bones, chronic illnesses—in such and other not-so-simple ailments, the problem is understood as having been caused by spells or similar actions of persons, usually women, using witchcraft. This is so among the indigenous peoples of central India; it is also so among the Dai of Yunnan (Nathan, Kelkar, and Yu 1998). In areas with a high incidence of malaria, the attempt is always to find out who is responsible for this ailment. This is even so in cases of the untimely death of cattle or other valuable domestic animals.

We give a few examples from our case studies in different parts of Jharkhand state: When Ramiya Devi's husband died, about three to four years ago, the villagers started blaming her for the death of her husband and started calling her a 'witch'. If anyone in the village fell sick, Ramiya Devi was blamed, and it was said that it was she who was putting evil spirits in the village. Even if some animals in the village died, Ramiya Devi was blamed for it. In another village, the neighbours called Pabia Murmu a witch. Whenever someone in the village developed a stomach ache, fever, or bad health, people tortured her by calling her a witch. Chakri and Pikari are being harassed by calling them witches. Whenever someone falls sick and dies in the village, the all-male village assembly meets. Chakri's and Pikari's families are fined and are not allowed to file a case in the court.

What these examples show is that the

> belief in the efficacy of witchcraft as a black magic is deeply seated in the collective psyche of the settled indigenous peoples of Jharkhand. These harmful people are in possession of a set of *bongako* or sprits that provide them the supernatural power to harm or even kill others at will. These evil spirits turn the minds of their human friends evil. (Bosu-Mullick 2003: 120)

Among the Oraon of Jharkhand in India, wizards and witches are also credited with the 'evil eye' and the 'evil mouth'. It is said that when a wizard or a witch looks at anybody's (even his or her own) healthy children or well-fed cattle or good crops with eyes of malice and mutters to himself or herself 'how fine!', the words act as an incitement to the malice of some malignant spirit, and serious harm is sure to be caused to the children, cattle, or crops (Roy [1928] 1972: 120, 189–92).

Among the Austro-Asiatic language communities (Munda, Ho, and Santhal being the major ones), misfortune is seen as due to *bonga*s or spirits. There are two kinds of spirits: the benevolent and the malevolent ones, or the light and dark spirits. Witchcraft involves learning to control the evil *bonga*s and then using them to bring misfortune or cause trouble. A person meeting with misfortune, either a catastrophic health problem or a severe economic loss, will go to the *ojha*, or witch finder, to find out the cause of the misfortune. He will then point out the woman who has tamed the dark *bonga* and caused trouble.

Although it is the evil *bonga*s who cause misfortune, they are invoked by the witches. Thus, it is the witches who are blamed for the trouble. Killing the witch or driving her out of the village will help in getting rid of the evil *bonga*, and thus remove the cause of trouble. The witches who cause misfortune are for that reason deprived of human concern and instead become a threat to society. In mid-nineteenth century India, Kolean Haram is said to have told the Norwegian missionary Skresfrud, 'The greatest trouble for the Santhals is witches. Because of them we are enemies of each other. If there were no witches how happy we might have been' (William George Archer in Troisi 1979: 1, 4).

Illness and misfortune in general are then understood as having not just natural causes but also social causes. And the attempt is to find out who is responsible. This is the witchcraft belief system among indigenous communities in central India. But even supposedly inescapable facts of life do not remain immutable. These facts and the cultures within which they exist themselves change, and what was immutable yesterday may no longer even exist today or sometime in the future.

Peasant culture in early modern Europe

Given that massive witch hunts were widespread and existed over a long period of time in early modern Europe, one would expect that there would have been some similar cultural system that attributed misfortune to the malign use of supernatural powers. However, unlike witch hunts in India and Africa, which were largely non-state events, in Europe witch persecutions were conducted in the system of courts. Nevertheless, communities brought great pressure to conduct the witch trials (Behringer 1996: 88). This was initially seen with regard to Germany, where autonomous village communities existed under the Holy Roman Empire. Analysis of witch trials in France too, however, showed that 'the impulse to hunt witches came primarily from beneath, from prominent people in local villages… these virtually autonomous rustics executed 450 per cent more witches than the Parlement of Paris' (Monter 2002: 9).

The prominent role of village communities in these witch hunts drew attention to the beliefs of rural people in early modern Europe. The brief account of these beliefs that follows is based largely on the works of Stuart Clark (2002), William Monter (2002), Julian Goodare (2016), and the very interesting work of Carlo Ginzburg (1991).

Clark (2002) argues that witch accusations were not made out of ignorance of the real causes of diseases, bad weather, or poverty. Rather, the peasant world was one in which supernatural 'often seems indistinguishable from religion' (2002: 110). The supernatural was part of the explanation for events that were unpredictable and uncontrollable. Beliefs in the supernatural as manifested in healing charms was characterized by Goodare as being 'not survivals *of* paganism, [but] survivals *from* paganism' (2016: 125). Paganism did survive among the indigenous peoples in the North, such as the Sami in northern Norway. But Ginzburg makes the important point that the Sabbath descriptions 'document myths and not rituals' (1991: 9). This approach would make sense of a lot of contemporary stories of witches flying in the night and so on, rather than understanding them as being true without any concrete evidence. Myths are ways of understanding the world often in allegorical forms and not accounts of supposed actions.

Supernatural explanations for events were acceptable among the peasants. The clergy, however, linked supposed magical practices with diabolism or pacts with the devil. Illustrative is the case of the Modenese healer Maria Priora, who was told by her inquisitors that her skill had to involve a demonic pact, 'because ashes or flour do not of themselves have the power to heal

the sick, especially those in *extremis*'... Either God or the devil must have intervened and 'since God holds superstitions in abomination, it is necessary to affirm that it was done by the power of the devil' (Clark 2002: 116).

In this way, peasant belief in supernatural power was turned by the clergy into diabolism. At the same time, for the ordinary people, the meaning of witchcraft was that 'it caused misfortune, not that it led to devil worship' (Clark 2002: 114). Early modern Europe was a period of substantial socio-economic and political transformations, transformations we will look into in more detail in the following pages of this study. Here, we make the point that misfortunes increased in this period, as argued by Behringer (1995), because of the Little Ice Age that affected agriculture across much of Europe. However, climatic crises work themselves out through the socio-economic processes underway. For instance, a shift from a form of community support in times of harvest failures being displaced by a market-based approach to transactions would increase misfortunes and possibly their attribution to particular persons, witches, and their supernatural practices, such as the 'milk witches' in the Netherlands who were accused of stealing milk from their neighbours (de Haardt 2013). These were the misfortunes of the developing market economy that were attributed to 'witches'.

Having looked at beliefs related to the supernatural among indigenous peoples in India and other parts of Asia and early modern Europe, we now turn to the nature of similar beliefs in many African countries.

Culture and witchcraft beliefs in Africa

Ashforth summarizes African witchcraft belief systems based on a notion of misfortune as being social in origin: 'So the form of the question that those afflicted must address in relation to this sort of misfortune is less what caused this suffering, than who is responsible for my/our suffering?' (2001: 6). Or, as Evans-Pritchard puts it, 'Witchcraft explains *why* events are harmful to man and not *how* they happen' (1976: 24). According to Evans-Pritchard, the Azande recognized a plurality of causes and explanations, with witchcraft explanations operating at the social level.

In parts of Africa affected by AIDS, the epidemic that singled out 'particular victims within intimate social networks can readily lend plausibility to the suspicion that suspicious individuals are pursuing secret evil work' (Ashforth 2001: 206). In malaria-prone areas too, the debilitating illness can lend itself to interpretations of misfortune caused by evil power. A paucity of health services to treat disease only strengthens the evil power interpretation of illness. Such views are said to be part of African culture.

The Ralushai Commission, appointed by the Government of South Africa, pointed out 'our forefathers regarded witchcraft as an integral part of our lives' (Ralushai Commission 1996: 192). The South African Law Commission also clearly expressed the African view of the nature and the supposedly continuing relevance of witchcraft beliefs:

> In these communities, witchcraft is *an inescapable fact of life*, and individuals and families take conscious steps within culturally approved institutions to actively avoid becoming targets of those believed to use magic to cause harm. Witchcraft is thus not regarded as a fringe religion or superstition, but it is considered a real threat and a cause of otherwise inexplicable misfortune, illness or death. (2014: 3.31, emphasis added)

African notions of witchcraft and witches are beliefs in power derived from the acquisition and use of supernatural powers, often termed occult powers. While women are usually thought to inherit these powers, men, on the other hand, are said to learn or otherwise acquire these powers. These supernatural powers are used either to accumulate through exploiting others, such as by turning them into zombies and profiting from the labour of those who are supposed to be dead, or to cause misfortune to others. Sometimes, the use of non-supernatural powers, such as through administering poison, is also included as witchcraft, which could then be seen more broadly as the ability to cause harm or evil to others. Of course, as Geschiere (2013) reminds us, witchcraft is used to cause evil within relatively closed communities of families or neighbours. Witchcraft is '... a major mode of imagining evil in Africa' (Haar 2007b: 3).

For those who believe in the existence of witchcraft, the supernatural forces are said to be not just vivid metaphors for other phenomena. For example, the turning of people into zombies then is supposed to be real, not just a metaphor for the alienated labour of capitalism. The extraction of internal organs and the sucking of blood too are supposed to be real and not metaphors.

We need to distinguish between belief in witchcraft as a fact of life in many parts of the world, including countries in Africa, and the existence of witchcraft in the form of witches. The widespread belief in witches is something that necessarily needs to be taken into account in social analysis and even development policy. In trying to understand this aspect, perhaps even a critical aspect of African culture, we look at it from a number of different angles—epistemology, including feminist epistemology, its functioning as an explanatory mechanism, and human rights.

Are they justified beliefs?

There exists a set of beliefs about witchcraft—that it is real and exists in the shape of witches. Is this a *justified* belief? One kind of justification is on the basis of rumour-based evidence, and another kind is on the basis of the process of acquiring knowledge. We look at the two possible justifications in turn.

The rumour-based basis of witchcraft means having a way of learning from neighbours or others about some strange worship of gods and spirits, or experiencing acts of illness or harm caused by witches using their supernatural powers. It should be noted that the evidence of using natural powers, such as those of poison, however mysterious its mode of operation may be, does not qualify as witchcraft. The *differentia specifica* of witchcraft is the use of supernatural powers, also described as occult powers. The evidence we would need to establish supernatural powers are experiences such as that of blood being sucked or organs being removed from a distance, or that of the living dead, zombies, being put to work.

It is readily acknowledged in the literature on witchcraft that such evidence cannot be produced. Even those who argue for the existence of witchcraft admit that there can be no evidence of supernatural powers. There, however, is a belief in the acquisition and deployment of supernatural powers. But is it a justified belief? If we accept that rumour is the basis of witchcraft epistemology, then we would have to conclude that belief in witchcraft is not a justified belief, since evidence cannot be produced for the supposed supernatural actions.

But then the requirement of evidence is supposed to be a Western epistemological construct. So, what about justification 'resulting not from the possession of evidence but from origination in reliable processes' (Steup 2018: 7). We look into the process of acquiring knowledge in witchcraft accusations. Can they be considered *reliable processes*?

When is an event, a misfortune, ascribed to witchcraft? 'Typically, the action of a witch is surmised in retrospect after the onset of illness or affliction and confirmed by the diagnosis of a diviner' (Ashforth 2001: 207). Of course, before the identification of a person as a witch, there is a system of rumours and gossip (Stewart and Strathern 2004). Our own experience with witch accusations showed that the finding of the diviner or, better termed, witch finder, is known in the concerned community. The woman who is going to be identified as a witch is generally easily identified beforehand—the tensions and jealousies are well known. As a person, a mother in Soweto told Ashforth, '... this thing [witchcraft] comes from a bitterness in someone's heart, like a

poison, causing jealousy and hatred. And you can never know that's inside someone's heart. You can think you know somebody, but you don't. And people, who have this spirit of hatred, this bitterness, they can do anything' (2001: 206). It is not the divination but the knowledge of neighbourhood contradictions that helps identify the supposed witch. In the Indian Bastar community event on the cover page, where the divining instrument is supposed to identify the witch, it was well known to the community much before the divining event which woman was going to be identified as a witch.

Identifying the supposed witch is the first step. The next step is the crucial part of the witchcraft epistemology—establishing that the woman is a witch. What is the evidence of a woman being a witch? Whether in early modern Europe or contemporary Africa or India, for that matter, it is generally accepted, even by votaries of the existence of witches, that there is no evidence that can really establish witchcraft. There can often be substances used for various rituals that are 'found' in the accused person's possession or residence. But these would be the usual substances that are used in rituals. They do not establish the use of supernatural powers and that too for causing evil.

The only evidence then is that of confession by the alleged witch. Confessions are usually extracted through torture, whether in early modern Europe or contemporary Africa and India. Besides confession, there was the ordeal, usually of water or fire. Ordeals were also used in Africa, at least in Malawi, until they were banned by colonial law (Ashforth 2015: 27). In ordeals, whether by fire or water, survival showed that the woman was a witch and hence executed; if she did not survive, she was innocent, but then it did not matter.

Even where confessions are not extracted through torture, they may be extracted through various forms of social pressure. These social pressures make the confessions dubious at best, and generally coerced through non-physical means. In general, criminal convictions based on confessions in the United States have later been shown to be incorrect by DNA evidence in 25 per cent of such cases (Innocence Project 2013, quoted in Ashforth 2015: 29). Particularly in close communities, there can be great social pressure to confess to witchcraft, to flying through the air, sucking people's blood, and so on:

> Women who say they are witches sometimes are the sacrificial lambs or the scapegoats of a crisis. They know that they are not guilty in the strict sense, but they are ready to take upon themselves the weight of guilt or shame so that a ritual may be performed, so that something is done about the crisis of those who are ill. Then healing can begin. (Ekoue and Rosenthal 2015: 136–7)

If confession is the only way to identify a witch, is this then an impartial and legal epistemology for knowing who is a witch? Or, in other words, for arguing in favour of the existence of persons who have and use supernatural powers? Confession, whether acquired through torture or social pressure or even entirely volunteered, cannot be classified as a reliable or legal process for acquiring knowledge of witchcraft and witches. We would have to conclude that torture cannot be the basis of a reasonable epistemological process. So, neither an evidence base nor a reasonable process can be established for witchcraft beliefs as justified beliefs.

It might be better to use the various accounts of supernatural activities as myths that have mingled and descended through time, in the manner that Ginzburg (1991) did for some of the witches' Sabbath stories from the European witch trials, showing through his work a cultural under-current of shamanistic practices in early modern Europe.

The witchcraft accusation is also circular, which again refutes the epistemological claims of witchcraft beliefs. Once accused, there is no getting away for the woman other than to confess. Denials will only increase the torture and thus lead to confession that she is a witch: 'If it is difficult to prove the guilt of a suspected witch, it is virtually impossible to prove her innocence, since the general presumption is that such a proclamation is always a lie' (Ashforth 2015: 21). The important point is that once accused, the accusation sticks and has consequences for the life of a person.

In an interesting case analysed by Ashforth (2015), Ms K. in Malawi was accused of witchcraft. She was powerful in her workplace, comparatively wealthy, and disliked by her colleagues who thought her 'proud'. When she went to court for defamation on being accused of being a witch, the magistrate in his judgment held that 'only if it had been proved that she is not a witch, or does not practice witchcraft ... [would] the two defendants have been found liable ...' (quoted from Ashforth 2015: 23). Since there is no way of proving that one is not a witch and that one does not possess supernatural powers, there is no difference between accusation and proof. As a result of the accusation, the net result was that Ms K. had to leave her place of employment: 'The outcome of the trial was that the witch, though not officially convicted as such, was in effect banished' (ibid.: 24).

Finally, it is only the reality of believing in witchcraft, as put forward by a judge in Cameroon, that is considered proof: 'One of the judges in the East felt compelled, for instance, to use the argument that in witchcraft affairs, proof has to follow ultimately from the judges "intimate conviction" that witchcraft exists' (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990: 149). This is as circular an argument as possible.

Animism and the supernatural

In the animist ontology of indigenous peoples, there is a continuity between things, whether human, animals or plants. This relatively flat ontology, overthrowing human exceptionalism (Kompridis 2020) has been developed, for instance, by Philippe Descola in his book *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2013). It has also been developed as a new form of vital materiality in Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010). Does this flat ontology lead to ending the distinction between natural and supernatural?

The work of foresters (Peter Wohlleben 2016, and Suzanne Simard 2016) has established that a forest is a 'cooperative system' (Simard 2016). There are mother trees and neural networks. Such a cooperative system involved in an exchange of nutrients and information should put an end to notions of plants as inert matter. The connections between plants and animals on their own and in relation to humans reinforces the animist ontology of a material continuity linking all organisms together (Descola 2013: 130). As Marshall Sahlins points out, this develops a neo-Copernican view that 'other people's worlds do not revolve around ours' (2013: xiii).

What, however, does this ontology, based on the active participation of non-human things in making events, mean for the belief in witchcraft? To remind ourselves, witchcraft posits the existence of persons with supernatural powers. In fact, Sahlins in his foreword to Descola's *Nature and Culture*, explicitly asks, 'What, for instance, could our notion of the "supernatural" mean for peoples who have no such sense of a "natural" realm composed of mindless, nonhuman realia subject only to their own laws?' (Sahlins 2013: xiii).

Some animist ontologies do have an idea of the transformation of human to animal, something that is supposed to be the attribute of shamans and similar ritual specialists (Descola 2013: 136). However, is this something that occurs or is it a *metaphor* for understanding the connections between humans and animals? Witchcraft beliefs are a magical way of understanding the world of misfortune. Nothing in the epistemology of witchcraft beliefs leads us to accept the existence of persons who have and use supernatural powers. Removing the boundary between culture and nature does not imply merging the supernatural with the natural. Merging the natural with the supernatural may well be a limitation of indigenous knowledge systems, leading to the demonization of women and witch hunts. The above is a short discussion of a complex topic, necessary only in order to clear the way for the anthropo-historical analysis that follows.

Witchcraft as explanation

So, how does one look at the witchcraft narrative as a representation or explanation of the event? The witchcraft accounts purport to be the analysis of various misfortunes. Jean and John Comaroff insist that they should not be taken as 'vivid metaphors' but as explanations of events. This approach should be contrasted with that of Michael Taussig, who analyses the use of the devil metaphor by Bolivian tin miners to express the 'fetishization of commodities and devitalization of persons' (1980: 227), so that they refashion the rites of commodity production as a 'distinct form of poetic wisdom and political insight' (ibid.: 227).

How useful are the witchcraft accounts as explanations of events of misfortune? The first point of limitation as explanation is that the witch narratives are almost always (with a few exceptions) posed as the actions of persons closely connected with the supposed victims of witchcraft. This, however, would deflect attention from the wider socio-economic forces at play that bring about the misfortune. This disjunction between the event and the person attacked as a witch is clearly seen in the case of migrant labour in Niger. The returning migrant workers, who would have saved something for their return, are the ones who are attacked as witches. The real exploiters, those who employ the migrant labour at low wages, escape attention.

This leads to the second point of limitation of the witchcraft narrative as explanation—that the explanations of the varied types of exploitation vividly metaphorized in terms of zombies and other such exploited bodies and the explanation of these exploitations necessarily go beyond the local and beyond those in intimate relations. Such an account based on witchcraft by persons nearby deflects attention from the wider forces affecting the local economy and creating local misfortunes. This deflection is also brought about by looking at supernatural causes of misfortune. Rather than actions to deal with the socio-economic and political forces involved in misfortune, attention is shifted to the supernatural, about which all one can do is so-called witch-cleansing or witch hunting. Human agency and responsibility are both negated in the process.

As Ralph Austen points out, in the case of Africa, the immediate targets of African witchcraft are other Africans, while they 'leave the European bases of power mystified to a point where they can only be avoided, not effectively invaded' (1993: 105). Consequently, he argues, it is difficult to 'depict African witchcraft as a weapon of African resistance' (ibid.). In contrast, in Taussig's analysis of plantation workers who understand the devil as metaphor, 'the plantation workers learn to conduct the class struggle in modern terms rather

than through sorcery, but they do so within a vision that is informed by the fantastic creations that emerge from the clash between use-value and exchange-value orientations' (1980: 231). In this case, unlike that analysed by Austen, there is not that displacement of the struggle onto the wrong terrain, a displacement from the owners or employers to fellow workers and their families.

We have argued that the witchcraft narrative with its circularity, the impossibility of producing evidence of witchcraft, and depending, as it does, on torture-coerced confessions is epistemologically flawed as a way of knowing or identifying the witch. It is also flawed as an explanation of misfortunes since it concentrates on the immediate persons in relation to the accuser, and thus deflects attention from the larger socio-economic and political causes of misfortunes.

Standpoints and human rights

The post-modernist attention to witchcraft discourses could have had some relevance as a way of bringing into discussion social practices of the marginalized, those marginalized by the dominant discourse of the colony and imperialism. But not all discourses of the marginalized fall on the same plane. They also require a critical reading—the sort of critical reading given to modernist practices but seemingly disallowed for indigenous practices. What we need to keep in view is the larger picture of social, economic, and political spheres, where the forces of politics are at play: 'they expose the double standards of a cultural relativism in which it is legitimate, expected even, to critique the assumed negative effects of imported practice and institutions—development being a case in point—but unacceptable to subject what are taken to be indigenous institutions to the same critical scrutiny' (M. Green 2005: 260).

Furthermore, communities, even marginalized communities, are not homogeneous. There can be hegemonizing discourses at global, national, and local or community levels. There are subalterns at each of these levels, those who lose or are victimized at each level from the processes that are underway. The oppositional ideology may not be accepted by all sections of the subaltern at each level. Most importantly, women may not subscribe to the 'community' view that insists that women's subaltern existence and women's strategic concerns should not be brought into the discussions. As mentioned in the Introduction, we adopt the standpoint of these subalterns in the witchcraft equation, that is, the standpoint of those accused and persecuted as witches. While the majority of those writing on the contemporary witch question in Africa and Asia adopt the standpoint of the belief in witchcraft and pay most

attention to witchcraft beliefs as the representation of events of misfortune, there are some, however, who adopt the standpoint of those persecuted as witches.

Eric Burton explicitly states, 'Given that in contemporary Tanzania, murders of supposed witches (as well as persons born with albinism) continue on an almost daily basis, I consider it necessary to highlight the most extreme forms of violence related to witchcraft instead of focusing on rumours or representations' (2017: 365). The personal trauma that affects the lives of those who are accused of practising witchcraft and are therefore brutalized and tortured does not receive adequate attention in academic and 'excessively sociological' discussions. Such an approach misses out 'the moral and ethical dimensions' (Haar 2007b: 3). We, therefore, included in this book accounts of those accused and persecuted as witches. And then there is Joseph Tonda, from the Congo, at the age of five declared a child-witch for refusing to eat cassava, who brought his experience into his analysis of this phenomenon (2018: 58).

This is a matter of ethics and even one of epistemology, as the standpoint of the oppressed women is one from which we base our analysis. It is the standpoint of the accused witches that will enable us to devise a way of dealing with and eliminating the witch problem. Starting from the other side of the coin will only reinforce the belief in and the corresponding persecutions of those accused of committing witchcraft.

Reading a lot of the analysis of the witchcraft phenomenon, we are struck by the absence of an ethical position with regard to those who suffer persecution through accusation of being witches. Economists are known to take supposed value-neutral positions. What is strange is that analysts of the human condition, as sociologists and anthropologists, also often choose to ignore the ethical and moral dimensions of the problems they are analysing. Culture and cultural practices or customs need to be looked at not only as culture but also as being imbued with some manner of ethics. In fact, the witchcraft crisis is, at one level, a conflict between different types of ethics or norms, a crisis of normativity, as put in Maia Green's analysis of Tanzania (2005: 249). In understanding such crises, however, there is a need to bring in women's human rights into the socio-economic transformation.

It is important to connect the question of human rights in the witchcraft discourse and the witch hunts. As said about Ghana, but applicable elsewhere too,

> an accused women loses all rights to self-defence and security. Every human rights abuse may be perpetrated by her accusers to make her confess and they will continue to torture and beat her up until she does so.... Since Ghanian society holds a strong belief in witchcraft and its

> horrible consequences, those accused of witchcraft are seen as legitimately being deprived of their human rights and dignity and therefore easily become the object of torture and even death. (Akrong 2007: 63–4)

Strangely Ashforth casts a doubt on the possibility of human rights in the case of the accused in South Africa who are said to be *mfiti* witches, who '... kills for the love of killing, or to sate a lust for feasting on human flesh'. On the presumption that such persons do exist, '... capable of amazing feats like flying through the night on a witchcraft airplane while leaving a physical body behind asleep in bed at home', 'at once human and not human, both superhuman and subhuman', such 'a person might be a witch and yet not be practising witchcraft, or even know she is such a creature' (Ashforth 2015: 25).

Ashforth concludes, 'The mfiti, then, is not the sort of being to which the notion of "human rights" applies without a considerable degree of ambiguity' (ibid.). But the categorization or accusation of being *mfiti* applies to a real human being, to whom human rights would presumably apply. By defining a person as being non-human, or both human and non-human, one cannot get away from the applicability of human rights, and that too in an age when there is consideration of the rights of non-human beings, such as other animals and the like.

The whole epistemology of witch accusations, as we see in our 110 case studies in India, is based on the use of torture or forms of social pressure to obtain confessions and the very presumption that accusation is no different from conviction. This, to us, is unacceptable, both on the grounds of human rights violations and on the epistemological ground of not constituting a reliable—both moral and legal—process of acquiring knowledge.

Spiritual insecurity

Ashforth forcefully argues that in Africa there is spiritual insecurity—'the dangers, doubts, and fears arising from the sense of being exposed to invisible evil forces' (2005: 1). He raises questions of justice with regard to those who 'see themselves as suffering at the hands of others causing "harm and death" by means of evil forces. For those who live in a world with witches, these issues of justice are of utmost importance in everyday life' (ibid.: 11). We concur with Ashforth in dealing with spiritual insecurity and related issues of justice. Among the indigenous peoples in many parts of India, there are manifestations of spiritual insecurity. There is a reality in spiritual insecurity, even crisis, that is facing many indigenous peoples in India. However, dealing with spiritual insecurity is not only a matter of socio-economic changes but also one of a transformation in the manner of understanding events of change.

In understanding spiritual insecurity, there is a need to separate explanation from event. There is an interaction of the two, where, for instance, explanation of an event in terms of malign action by a witch may be accompanied by persecution or even murder of the supposed witch. But interaction between explanation and event does not allow us to conflate the two.

In a recent discussion, Jean-Pierre Warnier (2018) raised an important question about debating witchcraft:

> Collapsing together the crisis and its representations amounts to yield to what I call the Magritte effect, that is, to mistaking the map for the territory, the painting of the smoking pipe for the pipe, the narrative for the event, the rumour for the actual crisis. Publications on witchcraft in Africa seem to yield to this bias more often than not. (Ibid.: 7)

Warnier sets out three elements in the situation—a tangible witchcraft crisis, the representation of the crisis, and 'the always elusive witch' (ibid.: 8). It is then easy to mistake the discourse or representation for the crisis itself. This leads to the Magritte effect where his painting of a pipe may be mistaken for the pipe itself. As Warnier puts it later on, 'One has to clearly distinguish between the event of the witchcraft crisis and the background noise of rumour and belief' (ibid.: 18). Warnier also admits, 'I feel all the more free to write such a statement that, in the past, I have yielded to the bias of giving precedence to the narratives without making them clearly distinct from the events behind them' (ibid.: 24). Unfortunately, much of the scholarly discussion of the witch question gives precedence to the narrative, over the event.

The spiritual insecurity identified by Ashforth, however, is quite real. There is surely a human rights issue involved in dealing with spiritual insecurity, particularly in the context of the rapid socio-economic changes the world of indigenous peoples in India and societies in Africa are going through.

WITCH HUNTS IN INDIA

Witch Persecutions and Resistance in India

3

In this chapter and the next, we concentrate on examples from our case studies to illustrate both the types of witch persecutions and successful or failed attempts to survive those attacks. Most often, the accounts are as told by the survivors themselves or, in some cases of murder of the accused witch, by a surviving family member. In the literature, other than in reports by human rights organization, little attention is paid to the brutal, demeaning, and murderous ways in which witch persecutions are carried out. These two chapters aim to correct this imbalance and bring the violence of witch hunts into scholarly discussions.

Witch violence involves denouncing women as witches, mostly after a witch finder (called *ojha* in some parts of central India) identifies a woman as a witch. The woman who is identified as a witch is subject to varying forms of torture and humiliation such as beatings, burning of body parts, being forced to drink urine and eat human excrement, rape, insertion of sharp metallic or wooden objects in her vagina, cutting of body parts such as nose and fingers, pulling out teeth and hair, and even killing by beheading. In most cases, such violence is committed in the presence of the village community, including community elders. It is a public event, such as that seen in the cover photograph of a recent (1998) witch hunting ritual in Kondagaon in the state of Chhattisgarh.

The incidence of witch killings

Since 2001, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has been recording witch accusations as the motive for murder. According to its data (see Table 3.1), a total of 2,468 murders were committed between 2001 and 2016, where witch accusation and persecution were recorded as the motive. In 2016, 134 persons were killed for supposedly practising

witchcraft and accused of causing harm to an individual, a family, or a community.

It is to be noted that the NCRB data are likely to be an underestimate of the situation. Instances of witch killing could well be listed under other categories, such as property disputes or personal vendettas. Nevertheless, the numbers of witch-related killings are non-trivial. The period 2001–12 averaged 168 witch murders[1] nationwide per year, with a range from 114 murders in 2004 to 242 murders in 2011. The murders were concentrated in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal, with one or two also in Bihar, Gujarat, and Haryana. They were concentrated in the indigenous peoples–dominated states of central India, but were not confined to that region.

The NCRB data show a clear difference between eastern central India, comprising Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh, and western central India, comprising Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. The average number of reported witch killings per year is 28.25 in Odisha, 31 in Jharkhand, 16.25 in Madhya Pradesh, and 11 in Chhattisgarh, while the average number of killings per year is 7.3 in Maharashtra, 2.17 in Gujarat, and less than 1 in Rajasthan. From the two hotspots of Odisha and Jharkhand, there is a clear decline in witch murders as we go westward, declining to less than 1 in Rajasthan, which is also a state with a large population of indigenous peoples. The difference as we go from the western to the eastern part of central India is something that needs to be analysed (personal communication Virginius Xaxa) in terms of the differences in witchcraft beliefs and witch hunts between different linguistic-cultural groups.

There is one curious feature in the NCRB data. Haryana is shown to have between 26 and 58 killings per year between 2005 and 2010. However, there are very few or even none before or after that period, from 2001 to 2004 and again from 2011 to 2016. Why this unevenness in the data? We would expect that this is a case of mis-specification. Haryana is known for what are called 'honour killings', that is, killing of young people, women and men, who marry against caste norms. These 'honour killings' could have got mis-specified as witch killings in those years.

Aasha, a Ranchi-based non-governmental organization (NGO) active on the witch issue, has a figure of 371 witch killings in Jharkhand state from 2001 to 2008. This is about 50 per cent more than the NCRB figure of 250 killed in Jharkhand in the same period. Aasha also estimates that about 100,000 women have been charged with being witches, giving an average of a little more than 3 witch accusations per village in the state's 32,000 villages.

[1] From the NCRB data, we have taken both 'murder' and 'culpable homicide' to be witch killings.

Table 3.1 Incidence of killing (murder and culpable homicide) of persons accused as witches

States	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016
Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana	20	23	38	25	75	26	33	23	27	26	29	24	15	10	19* (8 + 11)
Arunachal Pradesh	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Assam	3	1	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	5	1	–	0	1
Bihar	1	1	4	0	1	11	0	0	2	2	0	13	–	6	0
Chhattisgarh	16	4	14	11	9	10	8	15	6	8	17	8	7	16	17
Goa	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Gujarat	2	4	1	1	6	3	1	0	4	5	0	3	–	10	14
Haryana	2	0	0	0	28	34	30	26	32	58	5	0	0	0	2
Himachal Pradesh	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Jammu & Kashmir	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0
Jharkhand	22	28	19	28	26	30	50	52	37	15	36	26	54	47	27
Karnataka	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	77	0	–	0	0
Kerala	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Madhya Pradesh	13	24	29	14	13	13	14	17	25	18	15	11	11	24	19

(*Contd*)

Table 3.1 (*Contd*)

States	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016
Maharashtra	6	14	9	4	7	9	14	11	11	11	13	1	–	5	2
Manipur	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Meghalaya	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	1	2	3	0	–	1	2
Mizoram	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Nagaland	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Orissa	30	39	26	22	25	36	28	23	36	34	41	32	24	32	24
Punjab	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0
Rajasthan	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	1
Sikkim	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0
Tamil Nadu	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	–	0	0
Tripura	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	1	–	0	0
Uttar Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	–	3	3
Uttarakhand	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
West Bengal	13	14	9	8	5	1	0	4	0	0	0	1	–	1	3
Total states	129	153	151	114	197	188	179	176	186	182	242	121	160	156	134

Source: National Crime Records Bureau (2015, 2016).

Note: *Data not available/accessible for year 2015.

The police data do not provide a gender-disaggregated picture of those killed. However, our case studies and field discussions show that the vast majority were women.

Table 3.2 shows the incidents of persecution of women and men in five states of India, where we had conducted fieldwork. For Odisha, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, besides field notes of case studies, the researchers also collected data from newspaper and other media reports.

Our field data of 110 cases of witch persecution are not comprehensive, nor based on policy records. They are cases investigated by the researchers and the NGOs with which they have been engaged in this research. We do not claim our cases to be a representative example; nevertheless, in 6 out of 56 cases in Jharkhand, men were involved along with women, though the principal accused were women. Overall, however, we can conclude that most, between 95 and 100 per cent of those persecuted as witches, were women. This is in accordance with the writings of early Christian missionaries on different indigenous communities in central India. For the Santhals, the Norwegian missionary Bodding (1979) mentioned in the mid- and late nineteenth century that Santhal witches were exclusively women. Hoffman, a missionary in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reports that witch accusations included generally older women and not the men, though people did believe in the existence of wizards (1950: 2920).

In our cases, however, men were involved only as secondary victims, as husbands of the primary accused, their wives. An analysis of 59 reported

Table 3.2 Number of women and men persecuted as witches in five states of India

	Place	Time period	Number of cases	Women	Men
1	Odisha	2007–16	35	33	2
2	Rajasthan	2000–16	67	67	Nil
3	Jharkhand	2010–15	56	56	11 (along with women)
4	Chhattisgarh	2015–16	10	10	Nil
5	Telangana	2015–16	8	7	1

Sources: Odisha: Jiban Behera, field notes; Rajasthan: Tara Ahluwalia, field notes; Jharkhand: Punam Toppo, Ajay Kumar, and Gunshi Soren, field notes; Chhattisgarh: Punam Toppo, Ajay Kumar, and Durga Jha, field notes; Telangana: Sujatha and Revathi, field notes.
Note: Percentages need not add up to 100, since there can be cases with more than one victim.

court judgments of the High Courts and Supreme Court revealed 46 women as primary victims of witch persecutions. Men were primary victims in 7 cases and secondary victims in 15 cases (Partners for Law in Development [PLD] 2014: 122–4). Later on, we will discuss the meaning of some men also being labelled as witches.

Table 3.3 provides the overall picture of the accused, accusers, and the role of the community in our case studies in the state of Jharkhand.

What one sees is that women were in all cases the accused. In the six cases where men were also victims, they were the husbands of the principal accused women. In 50 out of 56 cases, the accusers were close relatives, while in 6 cases, there were other villagers, including, in one case, the village priest. This bears out Geschiere's characterization of the witch phenomenon in Africa, as 'the dark side of kinship' (2003), applicable in India.

Table 3.3 Some features of the accused and accusers in Jharkhand (56 cases)

Features of witch persecution		**Number of cases**
Accused	Married women	32
	Widowed	30
	Men, with the woman	6
	Unmarried women	2
Accusers	Relatives	35
	Brother-in-law	12
	Other villagers	5
	Husband	2
	Sister-in-law	1
	Village priest	1
Support to accusations within village	Many people	35
	Few people	17
	No one	3
The person accused approached for help	Yes	22
	No	30
Any intervention	Yes	13
	No	30

Source: Analysis of case studies by authors.
Note: There were a few blanks in the questionnaires, resulting in totals that do not cover all the case studies of Jharkhand.

Villages in Jharkhand were initially single-lineage villages, all supposed to be descended from a common male ancestor who cleared the forest and initiated cultivation. Now they may consist of more than one lineage. Nevertheless, women do not marry within the village. In-marrying women do not belong to the same clan as their husbands or their children, who belong to the father's clan.

Jharkhand villages also include some service castes, which do not belong to the indigenous community, whether Santhal, Munda, or Ho. Witch accusations, however, do not extend from the indigenous communities to other castes. In Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Telangana, however, witch accusations are not confined within the same community or caste. In fact, the case studies of Rajasthan show conflicts between members of different castes, particularly between the dominant Rajput or Gujjar castes and the service castes, linked with the former by *jajmani* (hereditary service or patron–client) relations, including exchange of goods and services.

We may point out that witch accusations in all indigenous communities do not necessarily follow this kinship pattern observed in Jharkhand. In Papua New Guinea witch accusations often occur across communities (Godelier 1982). However, in India there is some connection between persons involved in the two sides of the witch phenomenon. Either they belong to the same community, related communities as between castes in *jajmani* (patron–client) relations, or they are related in agrarian classes, as in Europe. If not related by kinship, they are neighbours in some fashion, validating Geschiere's (2013) more recent conceptualization of the phenomenon as a matter of intimacy, even if the notion of intimacy, as Geschiere insists, keeps changing.

Types of persecution

This section contains some cases that illustrate the various types of persecution involved in witch hunting. It should be pointed out that identifying the different types of persecution carried out was not part of the issues listed for field investigation. They came up as victims or their relatives recounted their stories. Most of the cases have been in the public domain, at least in their localities. Nevertheless, we have anonymized the cases. In many cases, there are ongoing court proceedings, which would also require anonymization in order not to influence legal matters.

Case studies have been classified into just one type of persecution or into one type of background factor. It should, however, be noted that cases often exhibit more than one type of persecution and one background factor. For instance, there may be an instance of both physical torture and killing, not just one or the other. Similarly, witch accusations may be a result of jealousy and

also the attempt to capture a woman's land and other property. Thus, the types are often overlapping, and the types should not be treated as being exclusive. Cases have been fitted into one or the other type in order to illustrate the different forms of persecution and the different types of background factors.

The main types of persecution that we marked are torture to extract confession, murder, physical and sexual violence, public humiliation, social boycott or other ostracism, being expelled from the village, verbal abuse, and being made to pay a fine. The use of torture to extract confessions is well documented in European cases, as also in Africa. The point is the charge of using supernatural powers is something that cannot, in fact, be established through what would be considered evidence. The witchcraft charge is a belief of the accusers, and the only way it can be established is through confessions, extracted through torture.

Torture to extract confession

In 2001, diarrhoea became rampant in a village in Khunti district of Jharkhand state. This led to the deaths of around five people, and it also affected a lot of animals and livestock. One day, under the influence of alcohol, a few villagers entered the house of a couple named Samia and Baria Oraon. They began to call Samia (the wife) a witch and beat up the husband. In order to save their lives, the couple managed to flee the scene. The next day, they returned with some people from Samia's maternal village to discuss the issue and plead their innocence. The villagers decided to consult an *ojha* (witch finder) in a nearby village to help find out whether Samia was really a witch.

The next day, the *ojha* after examining some grains of rice pronounced that Samia was a witch. The villagers began beating her up, but the *ojha* healer suggested that they should get rid of the evil spirit inside her. This required a ritual to be performed at their house. The couple were taken back to their home along with the *ojha* to perform the ritual. The ritual began by tying Samia's children to a tree outside their house. A fire was lit, and Samia was given a potion to drink. She started to feel drowsy and giddy. The *ojha* recited some *mantra*s and began forcing Samia to accept that she was a witch. She was worried about her children and finally confessed that she was a witch. Soon after her confession, Samia was subjected to torture, where cold water was thrown at her. Her head was shaved, and she was made to remove all her clothes. She had to wear the clothes of a guilty person (*dosimani mud aka kapda*). These rituals made her so exhausted that she had no energy left to resist these attacks. She was made to carry a *diya* (earthen lamp) on her head and forced to walk through the whole village. Samia collapsed during

the walk; at that point, the *ojha* stopped chanting and announced that Samia was finally rid of the witch (*dayaan*) spirit.

The villagers took around 50,000 rupees from Samia's husband for all the rituals performed, which left the couple in debt to a large number of neighbours. The couple sold their land, animals, and trees in order to pay the money. They now work in brick kilns to make a living. Samia still feels that if they manage to earn good money from working at the brick kiln, her brother-in-law would become jealous of them, as he keeps telling the villagers to stay away from her as she may go back to being a witch again. The people still look down on them and shun them in the village.

A 45-year-old married woman named Kairo from a village in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha was a poor farmer. Several years ago, Kairo was called a witch, and the villagers threw stones at her. One day, her neighbour's son fell ill. He was taken to an *ojha* and then to a hospital, but he died. Following his death, the *ojha* said the village had three witches. He also asked the boy's family to not cremate the body of the boy, saying that he would make the witches bring him back to life.

The villagers then went back to the village and dragged the three women and took them to the boy's house. The three women were Kairo, Matita, and Mariam, who were then tortured by the *ojha*. He made them eat red chillies and hit them with burning sticks. The three women could not endure this torture and confessed that they were witches, which made the *ojha* very happy. The villagers dragged the three women to a nearby field, tied them, and beat them up. The villagers told the women to bring the boy back to life, otherwise they would kill them. For three continuous days, the women were tortured. Then a *maulvi* (Muslim priest) came and said that he would revive the boy. He started performing some rituals but could not revive the boy.

Kairo managed to run away from the field in the night and came to a villager's house and requested him to open the door. As soon as the man opened the door, he realized it was Kairo, and he took her back to the field. Kairo was then stripped of her clothes and was tied to a tree. Then the police and the media came to the village. The police told the villagers that they had come to catch the women, and they took all three women with them and kept them in women protection cells. All the accused from the village were imprisoned for this incident.

A similar case was of a 65-year-old childless married woman named Pabia, from Lodam district in Chhattisgarh state. She and her husband live alone. As the couple does not have any children, they are called names in the village. Pabia's nephew Vijay and his wife, Tambia, say that Pabia and her husband have an obligation to perform rituals for the spirits, offer animal sacrifices to the gods, and keep the gods satisfied. However, it was said, as the couple did

not perform these rituals, that the spirit of the house has possessed them; as a result, the couple had to suffer so much physical injuries and financial losses. Tambia spread rumours that Pabia has no children because she is a witch and ate up her children.

Tambia's mother-in-law, Bahuni, fell very sick and blamed Pabia for her ill health. The *baiga* (witch finder) agreed with them that her ill health was the work of a witch. They performed a number of *puja*s for her recovery. According to Pabia, they should have taken Bahuni to the doctor if she was sick. Pabia could not cure Bahuni. Some men went to Pabia's house, dragged her to an isolated room, and locked her in there for eight days. They fed her the faeces of a dog and pig and, after that, made her drink a mixture of turmeric and chilli. They tortured her until she was on the brink of death. Somehow she managed to escape the room and ran to the forest. She contacted her husband, who reported to the police and registered a case against Vijay. The police arrested the nephew and took him to jail.

Women who were killed

The deceased woman is Dalia from Jashpur district of Chhattisgarh state. Dalia was a Dalit, former untouchable caste, and was separated from her husband. Dalia got married at the age of 13. She came to her mother-in-law's house from her parental home and started living with her husband who was an agricultural wage worker. A few years later, Dalia was told that she could not bear children; her husband then said that he would not live with her. She was 22 years old at that time. Her in-laws accused her of not having children because she practised witchcraft and would eat her children soon after they were born. Dalia was also accused of eating her late father-in-law. Her in-laws told the villagers that Dalia was a witch who practised witchcraft-related rituals and was slowly preparing to eat her mother-in-law.

One day, a child in the neighbourhood fell ill, and Dalia was blamed for it. She was accused of putting a spell on the boy. When an *ojha* was consulted, he confirmed that the boy's ill health was due to a spell. Dalia was thrown out of her in-laws' house. After coming back to her maternal house, she started living with her brother and his family. Her brother had two children. It was expected that Dalia and her brother would inherit their father's property. This made her brother-in-law Jiku and his brother Ramu jealous; they hatched up a scheme to demean her and started calling her a witch. The village *panchayat* (the village council) called a meeting. In the *panchayat*, 20–25 people in the village came to the decision that Dalia was indeed a witch. Therefore, Jiku succeeded in his intention to ostracize Dalia and her family from the village

and the *panchayat*. He had to incur huge expenses to accomplish this, as the *panchayat* took a bribe for coming up with a decision in favour of Jiku.

Dalia continued to live with her brother and his family. However, as time passed, even they started suspecting her and her intentions. Dalia's brother Jogesh had full faith in her, but the circumstances were such that he was in a dilemma about what he should do. In September 2015, the brother and his wife went to the fields to farm, while Dalia and her brother's two children (9 and 13 years old) stayed back in the house. She was in the house and the children were playing in the veranda. Suddenly, Jiku and his brother Ramu came to her house and started hitting her. Soon, a pool of blood flowed out onto the veranda. The brother's children witnessed the murder. The murderers dragged Dalia's body to a nearby farm, dug a grave, and threw her inside. They warned the children not to tell about this to anybody. The brother reported the murder the next day at the Jashpur police station. The next day evening, the police came at 7 p.m. to dig out the body and take it for post-mortem. The following day the body was handed over for a proper cremation. Jiku and Ramu are now in jail, charged with murder.

Samia, a 45-year-old woman from an indigenous community, lived with her husband in a forested area of Kaptipada Block in Odisha. She and her husband were farmers. Her husband's brother (Balisha) lived nearby as their neighbour. They stood to inherit land which had not yet been partitioned. Samia's husband was a physically weak person. In 2012, Balisha's eldest son died due to fever. His other son started spreading rumours that Samia was responsible for his brother's death as she had practised witchcraft. Soon after, Balisha's other son also fell ill. Balisha threatened that if his son did not recover, he would kill Samia. Balisha's son did not recover and was taken to an *ojha*. Balisha's son's condition worsened. Balisha is said to have beheaded Samia and returned to his own house. Samia's husband found his wife's severed head and body. The police were informed, and Balisha confessed to killing Samia. Balisha is now in jail.

In another case in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, the victim, Sugya, was a widow belonging to an indigenous community. She was around 45 years old at the time of her murder. She worked as a daily wage earner. Sugya's son worked outside the village and she lived alone. Sugya's nephew Deepak Murmu (aged 42 years) lived with his family in a house that was close to Sugya's house. He had two children. His daughter was around 11 years old and his son around 18. The daughter died of malaria in July 2014. Her father blamed Sugya for her death and claimed that Sugya practised witchcraft. Later, in August 2014, the son started to have chest pain. The nephew is said to have decided to kill Sugya with the help of his brother. They are reported to have choked Sugya to death while she was eating

dinner in her house. They cut her body into pieces and threw them away in the hope that wild animals would eat them. The dismembered body was discovered and the police were called. When an investigation was carried out, the police found the murder weapons in the possession of the two men, who are now in jail.

Yet another case is from Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Samia was a 52-year-old woman from an indigenous community. It is unclear whether she was a widow or unmarried; however, she was single at the time of the incident and lived with her younger siblings. Samia was ostracized by the village and was known as a witch. The daughters of two men named Jiban and Ramu both died suddenly on the same day and were cremated. All the villagers, including Samia, took part in the funeral. When Samia was returning home, one of the villagers named Jiva grabbed her hand, pulled her, and forced her to drink some local liquor. Then he took Samia to his house. Samia never returned home. Samia's brother reported the matter to the police. Samia's family suspected that Jiban, Ramu, and Jiva had killed her. The police interrogated the accused and later arrested them. The accused confessed to strangling Samia and also remarked that they had been trying to kill her for a long time. The local *ojha* had said that Samia was a witch and responsible for the death of some of the villagers. Five men were arrested in this case. However, one escaped from prison and ran away to the Jharkhand forest area.

In a village in Mayurbhanj district, there were three people named Ramesh, Setu, and Kamta whose children regularly fell ill. Earlier, their children had died, and the ones who were living were of poor health and regularly fell sick. Even after consulting a few doctors, there was no respite. Gradually, the people in this family started losing hope. All three of them went to different *ojha*s who said that a witch was performing some black magic. The three of them, along with a few others, decided to keep an eye on a few women in order to determine which one was the witch. The *ojha* said the witch lived under the shade of a tamarind tree so that no one could see what she was doing. It so happened that a woman named Baku lived near a tamarind tree. One night in September 2015, Baku left the house at night to go to the toilet. She washed her hands and feet near the tamarind tree. Ramesh, who was watching her, thought that she was performing witchcraft. Ramesh informed the others and they agreed to kill Baku. Two people stabbed Baku in her sleep. When her son, grandson, and neighbours came to know of the attack, they rushed Baku to a hospital where she was treated, but the next day she succumbed to her injuries. The police recovered the murder weapon, a knife. Two adults were arrested and sent to jail, while a juvenile accomplice was sent to a remand home.

Another case was Sukia, a 45-year-old married indigenous woman (now deceased) who lived with her husband in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Karia, a young man aged 20 years, had an aunt who died of unknown reasons. He suspected that Sukia killed his aunt through witchcraft. When Karia caught a fever, he went to an *ojha* who gave him some herbal medicines and told him that a witch was responsible for his aunt's death. On the following day, Sukia and Karia got into a fight over some cows which Sukia wanted removed from a field. Sukia angrily said, 'you have recovered from fever but will die soon'. This is the type of cursing familiar in European witch hunts. Karia felt that he was right about his belief that Sukia was a witch, and he shot Sukia with arrows. Sukia died on the spot. Karia was arrested and sent to jail.

Killing men as witches

The *sarpanch* (village head) of a village, a woman, Sushila Minz, informed us that women were certainly tortured by calling them as witches; however, women themselves should not propagate practices that looked like witchcraft as it created problems in society. Asked whether she believed in *tohni*s or *daayan*s (local terms for witches), she replied that she did believe some women were witches. Interestingly enough, she said that men did not have the physical strength to practise witchcraft.

Charana lived in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Charana was a married man working as a labourer. Charana paid for his sister-in-law's education. Her parents wanted her to be married, but Charana took care of his sister-in-law. Charana and his neighbours often fought over the water supply. When his neighbour's mother fell ill, the *ojha* was invited to inspect Charana's house who said that an unmarried woman was poisoning the water. The neighbours went to the *panchayat* and planned to throw Charana and his family out of the village. Soon after, Charana was found outside the village in the forest, bruised and badly injured. When asked how this had happened to him, he could not recall what had happened. A police case was registered. Thereafter, Charana and his family lived in constant fear in the village, but Charana did not want to leave the village as his ancestral property and land were in the village.

One night, Charana's neighbours are said to have gathered up the musclemen in the village, who attacked him and his wife. Charana's sister-in-law came out to save them, but she, too, was dragged and beaten. The neighbours killed Charana and after cutting his body put the body parts in a bag and threw it in a river. The family into which Charana's sister-in-law was supposed to get married had always held a grudge against Charana. They also had an eye

on Charana's property. This was the reason for the anger towards Charana. Charana's killers are now in prison.

In another case, a young girl Pishka in a village in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha caught typhoid. She was taken to an *ojha*, who informed them she was a victim of witchcraft and that the witch roamed around in the night at a fixed time. One man in the village used to return home every night around 7–8 p.m. The father of the ailing girl, Ramcharan, and the *ojha* agreed it must be this man who was the witch. The girl died, and Ramcharan is said to have paid 5,000 rupees in order to have this man killed. Subsequently, in another case in 2015 in the same village, a person started suffering from malarial fever. As the doctor was not able to cure him, the family went to the *ojha* who stated that it was due to the action of a witch. The man who was suspected of witchcraft was killed by the villagers the same year. The police arrested those directly responsible for his killing.

Physical and sexual violence

Amareen is a survivor of a witch hunt, who currently lives with her parents in Bhilwara, Rajasthan. She has a three-year-old son. About eight years ago, she was married to Saleem and lived in her in-laws' home. She was a very hard-working woman. She worked as a labourer during the construction of her in-laws' house. She worked day and night to complete the house. She had two divorced sisters-in-law, and they used to tease her and fight with her for petty things. However, she adjusted and spent some years with them.

On 23 March 2015, at midnight, her sister in-law Mariam, her mother in-law Salima, her brother-in-law Alam, and her husband attacked her when she was trying to put her child to sleep. They said that a witch's spirit had entered her and she would eat her child. They took the child away from her and started beating her with hot iron rods. This inhuman violence continued for the next two hours. She appealed for help but nobody came to help her, as it was midnight. They dragged her roughly to the *dargah* (an Islamic shrine) and told her that the injuries occurred because of the ghost struggling inside her body. She spent the whole night in great pain. Next morning, her brother was asked to come to the *dargah*. When he reached there, he was shocked to see Amareen's condition. He became petrified when he saw Amareen's sister-in-law beating her in front of him. He took his injured sister to Mahatma Gandhi Government Hospital, where she was admitted to the burns ward. In the local police station, her in-laws boldly stated that they had not beaten Amareen, and the injuries occurred because of the witch's spirit inside her body. The concerned police station registered a case under Sections 498/A and 326 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against the husband and in-laws.

Kaliavati from Bhilwara district of Rajasthan, whose husband died suddenly, was left her to fend for herself and her child. She cultivated food grains on her farm that would last her the whole year. She also worked as a daily wage labourer so that she could earn money to buy other ingredients and materials. One day, after returning from her day's work, she stepped out to go for a bath. On her way back, her brother-in-law saw her and started asking her why she was out that late and questioned her about her activities. He started to force himself on her and said that instead of her losing her *izzat* (dignity) by being outside the house, it was better things were kept within the family. Kaliavati managed to run away from him and began to scream for help. The family members woke up to her screams, but when she narrated what had happened, nobody believed her. Her brother-in-law stated that he only asked her where she was coming from at such a late hour.

When the family members went to the *ojha*, he said that it was because of Kaliavati that the sister-in-law was not being able to conceive a child. He also said that she had killed her own husband. After returning home from the *ojha*, the family members beat up Kaliavati and injured her severely. She was so badly hurt that she left home and ran away from the village.

Kalomani was a resident of Bhilwara district of Rajasthan and was accused of being a witch by her own family. She had two sons and two daughters. Her sons were married and had children of their own. One day, a cow died in their house. Her sons and husband began to call her a witch and blamed her for the cow's death. They beat her up very badly. She was weak after that, but they tied her to a tree and beat her further. When she began crying for help, the villagers came to help and rescued her. Her husband and sons told the villagers not to interfere in family matters. However, the villagers insisted and managed to rescue Kalomani. One of the villagers gave her shelter in his house where she was given food and care.

Not wanting to be an inconvenience to anyone, Kalomani decided to go back to her own house. However, she was beaten again so badly that she became unconscious. Her family threw her out of the house. After she regained her senses, she went to her parents' house and lived there for five years. She started to work as a labourer in a brick kiln. She saved her money in a bank and got herself an insurance cover. After that, she decided to go back to her husband's house, where, after her return, no one said anything bad to her initially. However, her insurance papers soon went missing, and her husband and sons began behaving as before. Her daughters-in-law also abused and beat her. In 2015, when another bull died, the family cursed Kalomani and beat her very badly. It was then that she finally decided to leave her husband's house and never come back. Now, she lives by herself.

Forcing out of the village

In a case at Bhilwara district of Rajasthan, Rama Bai from the Balai caste left her village and is living by the roadside after she was accused of being a witch. Her son is a truck-loader (*hamal*) in Bhilwara. Even after she moved to the city, some men came to her house and cut off her hair. They belonged to her own caste and wanted to take over her house. These people said that she was a witch and made her son ill. Chronic illness is often understood as being caused by witches. They asked her to heal him, which, of course, she could not do.

She said to us, using the English word 'tension', 'I am dying of "tension"'. Her attackers tried to push her into a well. Her son and daughter-in-law were in the house when this happened. Then they cut her hair with a pair of scissors they had brought with them, indicating that all this harassment was part of a plan. They want to encroach on her land and house. Of the gang, one man lived at the boundary of her plot. He used to inform the others of her whereabouts, and he was trying to increase the size of his farm by taking over land occupied by Rama Bai. Her son had given her money with which she built the house here by the road; she owns one acre of land and a well (a major property in arid Rajasthan). Her enemies thought that if she was denounced as a witch, she would go away and then they would grab her land. Both the social stigma of being a witch and the threat of murder would work to weaken her and make her give up her land.

Her husband says that only women can be witches, but men can become ghosts. Their daughter has been thrown out of her marital home. Her daughter was told, 'You are the daughter of a witch; we don't want you.' Both her sons' wives have left them. This is the social isolation caused by witch accusation. Rama Bai has never heard of any witchcraft-related incident in her lifetime. According to her, these people have been after her for the past four–five years. She had left the village thinking that it would be easier here in the city; however, this place was also isolated and these people continued to trouble her.

In another case in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, the survivor is a 48-year-old married woman named Churki, who belongs to an indigenous community. Churki and her husband, Amana, have about six acres of land. Even though Amana and his siblings physically distributed the land among themselves, the land records remained in the name of Amana's father. Amana's younger brother wanted to take the land belonging to Amana and spread rumours that Churki was a witch.

A boy named Pantu in the village used to fall ill frequently. The boy's father went to the *ojha* who said Churki was responsible. The villagers held a

meeting and decided that Churki would have to go to Gaya and perform some rituals. The cost of the travel and rituals (150,000 rupees) would be borne by Churki's family. As Churki's family did not have the money, Amana's younger brother was told to take care of the costs.

Churki's head was shaved by the *ojha*. He stripped her naked, tied a broom around her waist, and made her walk around the place where the ritual was being performed. On their return to the village, similar rituals were repeated. She was stripped and paraded with brooms tied around her waist. Thereafter, the village held a meeting and decided that Churki's family would have to pay 50,000 rupees to the *panchayat*. They tried to kill her, but she escaped and lodged a complaint at the District Legal Aid Cell, where she was accompanied by her brother. The District Legal Aid Cell took immediate action and forwarded the complaint to the local police. The police arrested nine people who are now in jail. Churki and her family remain ostracized in the village. Churki currently lives in the house of her brother in a different village, which is around 25 kilometres away from her own village.

Jagia is a resident of Ranchi district in Jharkhand. She lives there with her husband and four sons. The couple wanted their children to study further and become doctors or work in the government. However, due to financial constraints, the eldest two sons had to work in other fields and contribute to the family. They had to work and study, but because work would take up a lot of time, it was difficult for them to attend college regularly. Jagia and her husband owned one and a half acres of land; the food from it could not sustain them for the entire year, so they had to lease more land, whose produce helped tide them through. Jagia's husband was very weak and would get exhausted quickly, leaving Jagia to do the majority of the work.

One day, a relative of the family fell sick, and instead of going to a medical doctor, he was taken to an *ojha*. The *ojha* told the family that it was a witch who was making the person sick. The relatives blamed Jagia and started to call her a witch. Unfortunately, at that time, another resident of the village fell sick and died. The victim's family blamed Jagia for the death. They called for a *panchayat* (village assembly) meeting where everyone accused Jagia, calling her a witch and abusing her. They asked her to leave the village, but when she refused, they beat her up very badly. The villagers still torture Jagia and call her a witch. The reason Jagia was made the target for this incident was because her relatives and other villagers were jealous and did not want her sons do well by studying further and securing good jobs. They could not tolerate that the Kerketta family might become the richest family in the village.

Social boycott/ostracism

This case is about Sarna Devi, a woman in her late 50s who belongs to Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh. Sarna Devi does not have any formal education. She lives with her husband, four sons, three daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. The family subsists primarily on farming, coupled with occasional work in a factory. They have three acres of land, a three-room mud house, a bicycle, and two cows. Sarna Devi had a reputation of being assertive, so she was not liked by some people.

She was first accused of being a witch in 2011 by her neighbour. Earlier, the two families used to be on good terms. One day, the neighbour's son fell ill. Sarna Devi advised the family to take the child to the hospital. Later, she scolded the family for not taking care of the child. Sarna Devi then caressed the child. After about half an hour, the child passed away. The child's father was convinced that Sarna Devi caused the child's death.

According to Sarna Devi, Nandu made sexual advances to other women. She had advised him against such behaviour, which he did not take in the right spirit. He even forbade his wife, Charia, from allowing Sarna Devi to visit their home. However, Charia did not obey him. Sarna Devi had not faced any physical violence, but she has faced verbal abuse and mental torture. The villagers did not support her; she is afraid that she would be attacked any day. She fears that she will be subjected to physical violence. Sarna Devi is now socially ostracized and people stay away from her. Both Sarna Devi and her family members have to go to other villages to find work.

Sarna Devi's siblings cared for her, but her husband and son did not help her. The *panchayat* also did not help her. She wanted to report the matter to the police, but the *sarpanch* told her not to spoil the image of the village. Sarna Devi claims that she is not afraid of anyone. When asked whether she thought witches exist, she said, 'I used to think witches had power to do black magic, but after this incident, I don't think they exist. Whenever people want to take revenge, they accuse the other of being a witch!'

Similarly, there is a case of Churki Bai, a woman in her 50s from Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh. Churki Bai has no schooling, belongs to a scheduled caste (Dalit), and works as a farm worker. She had a son who fell ill and died. Her husband married again and had children with the second wife. However, Churki Bai was constantly taunted over the fact that her son had died. The people in the village said, *apne bete ko kha gayi* ('she ate up/killed her own son'). In 2006 or 2007, when a child was born to her husband's second wife, there was a celebration in the village. A bottle of liquor was left over after the party, and the police arrested Churki Bai for possessing illicit liquor. She was then let out on bail. The complaint over the bottle of liquor was made by her neighbour. When she was let out on bail, he was very annoyed. His daughter

accused Churki Bai by saying that after Churki Bai's son died, he became a ghost and was bothering her. After this accusation, Churki Bai was taken by force to a *baiga* (a healer), pulled by her hair and arms twisted. Churki Bai, along with her husband and a neighbour, informed the police about this incident. The neighbour was arrested and then let out on bail. Neither the *sarpanch*—the head of the village *panchayat*—nor any of the other *panche*s (other members of the *panchayat*) helped her. However, the former *sarpanch* and volunteers of an NGO helped her during the filing of the case. There were no other attacks on Churki Bai after this. However, she has been socially ostracized in the village. She stays alone in her room and is not able to find work.

Kalavati, a resident of Bokaro district of Jharkhand, has also been subjected to violence based on accusations of witchcraft. Ten years ago, when she lost her husband, her own family members blamed Kalavati for his death. They called her a witch and beat her up brutally. Since then, all the villagers have subjected her to a great deal of discrimination. No one talks to her or lets her participate in festivals and functions. All the women disregard her. She now works in a brick kiln to earn a living. She struggled and succeeded in educating her children. All her children are now settled, married, and living peaceful lives. Kalavati is an independent woman who does not want or take any help from anyone and prefers to earn her own living. She does not go out of the village, and after being subjected to so much torture, she has, however, developed a low self-image and says, 'I dislike myself.'

There is another case of Doria and her husband, Turba, in Ranchi district of Jharkhand. A resident of the village, Tomu, had a daughter who died by jumping into a well. Doria was blamed for the death. The villagers started to beat Doria and her husband, claiming that Doria was a witch who made the girl jump and die. The other villagers were so outraged by this that they even threw a crude bomb at Doria's house. Fortunately, the bomb missed and nobody was hurt. Doria filed a case against Tomu, who was arrested and sent to prison for three months. This incident continues to affect this family for over 15 years. While Doria and Turba Tirkey have died, their family and children are still isolated and ostracized and are referred to as a family of witches. They are not allowed to participate in any village activities. When their children fall sick, no one helps them out. Also, there is no assistance from the government, nor do they get any money from their relatives.

Individual and collective resistance

Village assemblies, which are all male affairs among indigenous peoples in central India (and even among the matrilineal Khasi in northeast India), are often players in witch accusations and persecutions. As will be seen later, in

Africa and even in early modern Europe, village mobilizations have played a key role. The village assemblies are often full of belief in witchcraft and carry out persecution of witches. Some examples of the manner in which village assemblies have been involved in witch persecutions are given in cases that follow.

Not all witch accusations end in the continued persecution of the accused. There have also been some examples of successful resistance by the accused and their supporters, whether family members or the NGOs. Some of the examples that came up during the field investigations are given below. These will be useful in helping draw strategies to end witch hunting.

In Rajasthan, a study (Mathur 2006) shows that there have been witch accusations between and within castes. In the latter, in some cases the caste *panchayat* (caste council) intervened to stop witch accusation. In one case, they threatened to impose a fine on the accuser if the accusation was not given up. The *gram panchayat* (village council) has limited administrative powers in the village and is usually dominated by the ruling upper castes. Nevertheless, there have been instances where they have intervened to stop accusations against lower caste women. They have also brought together both sides for a dialogue. In one case, the village council helped a woman seek police help.

These actions of caste and village councils are of interest in showing a way to deal with witch accusations. Despite a widespread belief in the existence of witchcraft, such action shows that some villages are finding ways of dealing with the tensions arising out of accusations. Rosa of Ranchi district in Jharkhand was subjected to accusations of witchcraft. The villagers blamed her if someone got hurt, fell sick, or had an accident, or even if an animal died or was suffering. If someone fell sick after eating something, they would blame Rosa, saying that she was looking at them while they were eating, so they fell sick. The villagers would even go to her house and fight with her. They abused her and stopped interacting with her.

Rosa was a strong woman and she told the villagers that if they really wanted to make sure that she was a witch, they should go to an *ojha* and find out. At the same time, Rosa also went to see the chief *ojha* and threatened him that if he pronounced her a witch, she would file a legal case against him and drag him to the court about his illegal practice. When the villagers visited the *ojha*, he told them that Rosa was not a witch and that people were falling ill because they were eating the wrong food. After that, they stopped calling her a witch and troubling her.

An incident of witchcraft-related violence occurred to a couple—Dhurki and Ghesu—of Khunti district of Jharkhand. They have three children—one son and two daughters. They worked on their own farm to earn a living; however, since this was not sufficient, they would go to the forest to collect wood and

certain herbs, or as they called it, *jadi buti*. With this, they started to cure minor ailments of the people in their village, which earned them extra money.

In February 2015, a resident of their village (Shukru) fell ill. He started suffering from aches and pain in his legs. The family members consulted an *ojha* for medication. However, the pain did not subside and spread to Shukru's head and stomach. Soon after that, he succumbed to his illness. Shukru's family visited an *ojha* in another village and were told that Shukru was subjected to a *dayaan* killing, as it seemed that the person who was treating him was the one who killed him, thus pointing a finger at Dhurki and his wife, Ghesu, for being witches and practising witchcraft. Shukru's family and other villagers believed the *ojha* and began to refer to Ghesu as a witch.

It so happened that within a few days of Shukru's death, some people and a few animals also died in Manmani village. This led to the villagers visiting the same *ojha* in the nearby village. The *ojha* said that there was a couple in the village (that is, Dhurki and Ghesu) who were practising witchcraft, causing the deaths of people and animals. The *panchayat* of the village then called members of the Sarna community (an indigenous, animist religion) to ward off the ill effects of the witches. On the pretence of getting rid of the witches, the Sarna worshippers entered the couple's house and started to beat them up. The next day, Dhurki approached the villagers and offered a plea of innocence. He also offered to pay money as compensation if his wife was actually a witch. The *ojha* was called to assess the situation, and he stated that the village had become polluted because of the witches. After hearing this, the villagers became furious and they began to beat up Dhurki. He managed to flee the mob and reached the police station, where he filed a case against seven of the men from the village. When the police came to investigate the situation, they told the villagers to reach a compromise and solve the problem, otherwise they would have to arrest the villagers and then left. It seems that the couple in question was gaining popularity and prestige in the village by treating villagers for minor ailments. This probably led to the *ojha* feeling threatened in terms of his sense of importance and his livelihood, so he had accused the couple of practising witchcraft. The couple, however, was successful in stopping the persecution.

Some distance from the district headquarters of Deoghar in Jharkhand, there are some 50 Santhal families living there. Samia, the wife of Kisna, and Rameli, the wife of Setu, are well-off members of this community. Samia has been an active member of Nari Shakti (a women's rights organization). When the *panchayat* elections took place in their village, Samia was elected as a representative of the ward. However, lately, both Samia and her mother-in-law, Rameli, have been subjected to harassment, where relatives have been calling them witches.

Most of the disputes in this area are related to witches and ghosts. Whenever someone falls sick or dies, people go to consult an *ojha.* Under his influence, they blame women from their own kin or neighbourhood. Samia and Rameli also had to suffer this when a cousin-in-law fell ill. He blamed both Samia and Rameli for the illness. Relatives gathered together at their house and beat them up. When the *panchayat* was called the next day and the *ojha* was requested to investigate, Samia and Rameli were declared innocent. The *panche*s warned the relatives not to repeat this mistake. Even though the patient recovered, he could not let go of his enmity with them. One day, when Kisna and Setu were returning home, Jatru and a couple of his relatives got hold of them and started beating them with iron rods. They were injured very badly and were saved only because other villagers reached on time and intervened. Buddhi, who is Samia's husband, has filed a case and demanded legal action from the police station, also requesting protection for the family members. Samia and Rameli have friends and well-wishers who openly support them, and they still continue to live in their own house.

Phooleshwari was a resident of Jamtara district of Jharkhand. She was a widow and had a son. As she lost her husband, her son could not study beyond middle school. Both the mother and son were making a living by farming about three *bigha*s (an acre) of land. Sometime in 2007, Phooleshwari's sister-in-law fell sick. Her husband, Logun, took her to an *ojha*. The *ojha* revealed to him that it was Phooleshwari who made his wife sick as she was a witch. Hearing this, Logun took a few other relatives and went to Phooleshwari's house, where they abused her and beat her up. They told her to leave the village and threatened to kill her. Phooleshwari wanted to hold a *panchayat* but Logun did not let her. Afraid for her son and herself, they fled to one of her relatives' house. From there, she lodged a case with the police. The police investigated the matter and got the *ojha* arrested and sent him to prison. This entire process took about five years. During these years, Phooleshwari and her son kept wandering across other villages. She was able to go back to her village in 2013 with the help of well-wishers and now lives in her own house.

Mariam is a 55-year-old woman who has no children and has been earning a living for herself by farming her 10 *bigha*s (four acres) of land. In 2014, her brother-in-law Baluram's son fell sick. Mariam was labelled a witch and blamed for the sickness. Baluram went over to her house, abused her, and threatened to beat her up. Being afraid for herself, Mariam narrated this incident to the women's organization (Mahila Samakhaya) in the village, of which she was a member. The members of the organization convened a *panchayat* on this issue. They invited Baluram and decided to counsel him. With all this support, Mariam has been able to get her life back to normal and continue living in her house in the village.

Samia and Sukra are both 60–65 years old and sisters-in-law to each other. They are from Godda district of Jharkhand. Both women live together and own a small piece of land, which they farm to make ends meet. They live in a mud house with a thatched roof. Two years ago, a cattle of a brother-in-law fell sick. He beat both the women, alleging that they were witches. Feeling aggrieved over the torture, the women went to the village head and narrated the incident. Due to transportation problems, poverty, and ignorance, the women were unable to approach the police. The village head suggested that they approach an NGO that undertook mediation between the two sides and got the matter sorted out. At present, both the sisters-in-law are living a peaceful life and no further harassment has been reported.

Box 3.1 Hari Bai's Successful Resistance in Rajasthan

Hari Bai from Bhilwara district in Rajasthan belongs to the farmer Gujjar community. She is a widow with no male children. She owns 15 acres of land and two wells. Her husband's brother wanted to take over this land and not let it go to her daughter (that is, her niece and adopted daughter).

Hari Bai was at home when some men attacked her. She said that they pulled off her nose ring and tore her nose in the process. They kept her tied up for the entire night and demanded that she sign over the land to them, which she refused to do. Then they tried to throw her into a well, but on the way to the well, she shouted out and they stopped.

These men called a Gujjar *panchayat* and had Hari Bai declared a *dayaan* (witch). They cut her hair, stripped her naked, and put her on a donkey. They announced that if anyone helped her, they would be fined 100,000 rupees and sent her away from the village. Her daughter's family then took her in. The Gujjar *panchayat* tried to fine them, but they refused to pay the fine. Her daughter, who was married in a village located at a distance of 7–8 kilometres from Hari Bai's residence, approached a feminist activist, Tara Ahluwalia, in Bhilwara. With Tara's help, the matter became part of the media discussion and Hari Bai was featured in a television broadcast. This was telecast when the director-general of police (DGP) of Rajasthan was in Bengaluru and reporters asked him about this case of witchcraft-related persecution. The DGP transferred the local police chief and a case was instituted against the brother-in-law and other principal attackers.

The police set up a post in the village to protect Hari Bai. When a *panchayat* meeting was held to discuss the matter, Tara insisted that Hari sit on the meeting platform (*chabutra*) and not on the ground. Traditionally, women were not allowed to sit on the platform. However, Hari Bai sat on the platform, and so the norm was broken. When we met her, Hari Bai said that since then there had not been any other case of witchcraft-related persecution in the village.

A similar incident happened to Sarita in another village of Bhilwara district, Rajasthan. Initially, the process started when a woman named Durga and a few other women said that a witch was inside their bodies, whose name was Sarita. When people came with hot iron rods to burn their bodies, they said that the witch had gone. They even said that there is some supernatural power around them, which gets inside them and affects them. That this was a made-up story became clear in front of the village, and all the culprits ran away as soon as they realized their mistake. After that, the *sarpanch* was asked to write a letter where it was stated that if such cases of witch hunting took place in the village, then all the *mukhiya*s (village heads) of the villages would be responsible. Since then, Sarita has been staying in her own village with her family without any problem.

In the field she told us how she understood the witch problem.

> A situation has come up recently in that when people say that a witch is inside her, they then put hot iron rods on her body and the witch is said to have run away. People tend to think that the witch was playing with her body. But has anyone ever heard that a woman who calls herself a witch, burns her own body? No, because she knows that it is her own body that will get burnt and not that of the so-called witch.

Box 3.2 Sarita on witches

> There is nothing like a witch in the world. It is a totally made-up story which has grown with superstition. The main reason behind is to lower the position of women, to torture them, molest them, boycott them, and seize their land. It is a well-planned game of men, who are in power.

Ramalah Bai is a 70-year-old widowed woman living in Mancherial district of Telangana. She is the mother of six children—four daughters and two sons. All of them are married and settled. She currently lives with her youngest son, Kishnan. Ramalah Bai was married to Kursanga when she was 10 years old. They lived together for 10 years, after which Ramalah Bai was accused of being a practitioner of witchcraft. She was sent back to her mother's house. There was a quarrel between her sister and her husband and a *panchayat* was set up, where the head of the *panchayat* declared that Ramalah Bai and Kursanga were divorced since she was believed to be a witch (of course it was not a legal divorce but was pronounced by the village assembly).

After a few years, Ramalah Bai re-married Gangu. After she had two children, the villagers again accused Ramalah Bai of practising witchcraft; however, her husband did not believe these accusations and supported his wife. Due to his support for his wife, the villagers ostracized and socially

boycotted both Ramalah Bai and her husband, and they were made to live outside the village. The family began their life outside the village and earned their livelihood through agricultural wage labour. The couple got their children married. After some years, the husband died of viral fever. As she was a social outcast, Ramalah Bai lived alone for some years.

However, some young educated youth of the village made an effort and created awareness in the village to remove this social boycott on Ramalah Bai and her family. The community gradually accepted Ramalah Bai back, and she now lives with her youngest son in the village. The village has a very long history of social boycott of people if someone was found guilty or even thought of as practising witchcraft. However, after the awareness programme about blind faith and unlawful practices, the social boycott has stopped and people do not follow this practice anymore.

Evidently, one of the key features of gender systems in most indigenous societies is the witch hunts of women, those women who in some ways attempt at transgressing the social norms, asserting their rights over land and property, or in the ways they or their households do better than others in the village. The fear of women being denounced as witches not only is embedded in their personal agency but also has made its mark on social, economic, and decision-making domains of formal and informal institutional structures. However, indigenous women, in the societies that we have studied, have not been silent spectators of power and resources in male hands. There is a range of implicit and explicit ways in which they have manifested their individual and collective agency to claim their rights in the community. These women have fought for their rights over resources (that is, land and house), ritual knowledge, and decision-making in the community institutions.

Box 3.3 A women's collective in defiance of witch persecutions

During our fieldwork in Jharkhand, we came across a community of 13 indigenous women who were driven out of their villages after being denounced as being engaged in witch practice. These women have established themselves with support from others, including an NGO, Aasha. Even in narrating their individual stories with tearful eyes, they did not betray any signs of submission to the all-pervasive system of witch hunt practice in their villages.

Of course, many women remain in a state of fear but would speak and assert their rights to structures of power and resources, even though the patriarchal system did create obstacles. Some women prefer not to speak to outsiders but exercise implicit forms of resistance in what James Scott describes as 'off-stage defiance' (1985: 23).

There are also some women who keep silent and show compliance to witch hunt norms and to the witch finders (mostly men) as a result of fear of insult, torture, and brutal physical assault. The embedded structures of power and male dominance have typically been both personal and community-based. Any assertion of individual or collective agency in the system of joint reproduction in the family and home without any control over production resources has meant imagining an entirely separate existence for women, requiring a more radical step than it has been for the resource-poor indigenous men. Like any other subordinated group, women may be socialized into accepting a view of their dependent position and interest as prescribed by the social order, maintained by formal and informal institutional rules (Kelkar 2013). Having said that, it also needs to be acknowledged that resource-poor indigenous and rural poor women are making use of their individual and collective agency (as we saw in the case of Hari Bai and others) to bring about changes in various social domains and thereby influence both policy action and institutions of indigenous and peasant societies.

Factors in Witch Hunts 4

In this chapter, we give some examples from our case studies to illustrate the different factors leading to witch accusations and persecutions. The factors identified in the witch hunts are the following: seizing land and other property from women; jealousy; asking for dues; assertion of independence and initiative by women; resisting sexual predation; unconventional religious practices; and causing illness and misfortune. Causing illness or misfortune is a common factor in all accusations. However, there are some cases where discussion did not disclose any other factor, and such cases have been included in the category of the main charges against a woman, which were seen as the determining factor for her being labelled a witch.

In our discussions with the survivors, there was a readiness on their part to discuss these above-listed factors. Since the survivors knew that they were not witches, in the sense of having and using supernatural powers, even if they too believed in the existence of witches, they were very keen to look to these other factors that they think might have led to the witch accusations. Of course, if you do not ask the question, you will not get an answer.

In discussing these factors, other than the belief in harm caused by alleged witches, there is an element of reflexivity involved in the process. There, however, was an attempt to reduce this by discussing the case and then noting where it fitted in the categories of other factors, whether jealousy or so on. It is not as though the survivors were provided with a list and asked to choose from among the factors listed. After discussions with the concerned woman or man, we analysed a case and marked it as belonging to one or another category or belonging to more than one category. In fact, even this list of categories was derived from a day-long discussion with 13 survivors. The authors did not have the category of different religious practices as a factor in witch accusations. This came out of that day's discussion, when it was mentioned by one of the women alleged to be a witch.

The accounts of the persecutions were narrated by the victims themselves either in the local language or in Hindi and then written down in Hindi or English. In the case of the Hindi accounts, they were then translated into English. Having ourselves participated in numerous conversations with witch-accused persons in India and China, we are quite confident of the broad outlines of the causes of the conflicts and the persecutions involved. In addition, in the periods when we stayed in these villages, as participants of the ongoing struggles in these regions, we also heard similar accounts. Our discussions with human rights and other activists in these regions also bear out the overall veracity of the narratives. In a large number of cases, the local *ojha*, who was also the witch finder, was involved in identifying a particular woman as the witch (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Factors in witch persecutions in India

Factors	Number of charges	Percentage
Land	42	38
Jealousy	31	28
Causing illness	19	17
Assertion of independence	16	15
Resisting sexual advances	8	7
Asking for dues	3	3
Unconventional religious practices	3	3
Total	122	

Source: Fieldwork cases in Jharkhand (55 cases), Chhattisgarh (10 cases), Odisha (25 cases), Rajasthan (12 cases), and Telangana (8 cases).
Note: Total number of case studies: 110 in the states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana, and Rajasthan. In some cases, multiple factors were listed, which makes the total factor listing more (122) than the number of case studies (110).

We illustrate the factors of witch hunts by women's self-narratives of the causes and consequences of being alleged to be a witch.

Seizing land and property

In our cases, land seizure is the most frequently occurring factor in witch accusations and persecutions. In an agrarian society, land is the key means of production. There is understandably much competition for land, particularly

for the land on which wet rice could be cultivated. Competition for land, however, is not of a free-for-all variety. The indigenous societies we are looking at in central India are all patrilineal. Land is inherited in the paternal line. Patrilineal inheritance creates a contradiction between widows and the late husband's male relatives. The latter are keen to take over the land held by the widow. This is often reflected in witch accusations, as the relatives try to get hold of the land even while the widow is alive. Such a widow, with or without minor children, is weakened by the fact of patrilocal marriage. The woman leaves her own network in her natal village and moves to her husband's village where she does not have a social support network. This makes her an easy target for witchcraft accusations with the intention of driving her out.

Becoming landless would result in the person or family having to rely mainly on gathering and sale of forest produce. Now, there is the option, if option it can be called, of moving away to a peri-urban area to do casual work in the unorganized sector. But not having any land with which to produce some food or income is a step to impoverishment and being forced to mainly carry on wage labour. In some of the cases, we have seen how the expelled women struggled to earn an income and put their children through school. School education is increasingly understood as a means out of poverty. This itself is a very different understanding compared to the 1970s, when we began our work in indigenous peoples' areas. At that time, people would argue that education was of no use. We do not now find such sentiments being expressed. But being deprived of land is a key factor in destitution, at least until the children are old enough to seek employment.

Malti Devi is a 75-year-old woman in Bokaro district in Jharkhand. Twenty years ago, one of her brothers-in-law, Shukru, was paralyzed, which resulted in him being unable to move any part of his body. Many *ojha*s were consulted and treatment was given. One *ojha* examined the rice in the house and stated that Shukru was under the influence of a witch. After this, Malti Devi was subjected to violence, as her other brothers-in-law came to the village, beat her up, and accused her of being a witch. She was so severely injured that she could not move or get up. Due to fear of her brothers-in-law, she used to stay locked up in the house with her son and come out only in the night to collect water. Once her food supply ran out, she was compelled to leave the house. Nobody paid any attention to Malti Devi. They thought that because she was a witch, if she said or did anything, the whole village would be destroyed. She had two acres of land, which were in the name of her husband. After the death of her husband, her elder brother-in-law took one acre of her land. Her younger brother-in-law said that he would take over the rest of the land.

In 2011, when a woman named Aireena died, everyone blamed Malti Devi, calling her a witch and beating her up. A *panchayat* was called where everyone cornered Malti Devi, with no one supporting her. She was tied to a tree and was told that she would have to pay a monetary penalty for her deeds. She was asked to hand over the remaining one acre of land and animals that she reared to her brother-in-law. She was forcibly made to sign the papers, which made her brother-in-law the owner of the land. She was made to buy alcohol and cook food for the entire village, and only then set free. Even today, people refer to her as a witch and no one talks to her. She collects forest leaves to make *dona*s (leaf cups) and sells them for a living. After her son died, her daughter-in-law also accused her of being a witch and causing her son's death. She was kicked out of her own house. She now lives in the forest under the trees where she has made a shelter out of leaves.

Chunki Devi in Bokaro district in Jharkhand is 60 years old. Around 23 years ago, she became a widow and was left completely alone to fend for herself. Her relatives treated her badly and disregarded her in every way possible. She worked on her fields by herself and looked after her house as well. Her sister-in-law could not understand how Chunki was managing to do everything by herself. She became sceptical about Chunki's strength and energy and started calling her a witch, as they believed that only a witch could have the powers to manage all her affairs so smoothly.

In January 2015, Chunki's brother-in-law's son became unwell. He was taken to an *ojha*, but there was no improvement and the son died. The *ojha* put the blame on Chunki, saying she had done some kind of evil magic on the boy, causing him to die. Hearing this, Chunki's relatives tied her up and beat her. She managed to escape and hid herself in the house. After she came out, she began living the way that people would expect her to be: depended on other people for food, stopped maintaining her house properly, and looked dishevelled, often not taking a bath. Once her relatives saw the unhealthy environment she was living in, the brother-in-law charged that the evil influence was gradually vanishing from Chunki Devi and finally stopped torturing her.

When Chunki asked him for her share of the land, her brother-in-law refused to give her any land, saying that she was a witch. She only managed to get a small portion, and the rest was taken away. She now lives in a miserable condition and hardly gets anything to eat. Even so, she does not work anywhere, being afraid that people would start calling her a witch again and torture her. She constantly fears for her life.

Sabina Manjhi, a 70-year-old widowed mother of two sons, living in Bokaro district of Jharkhand, has been a victim of witchcraft-related violence. In 2004, Sabina's brother-in-law consulted an *ojha* for the treatment of his

son's diarrhoea. Unfortunately, the son did not survive, and the *ojha* declared that the death was caused due to the influence of a witch. The brother-in-law blamed Sabina and accused her of being a witch and causing the deaths of his son as well as her own husband. He beat her up and forced her to leave the village. Fearing for her life, she now stays away from the other people of the village, collecting and selling wood from the forest and by making *dona*s (leaf cups). Her brother-in-law has taken control of her house and fields. She is ill-treated by everyone in the village due to this incident. Today, she cannot even go to collect water or access the market areas. She has been banned from participating in any festival or function in the village. Sabina is in constant fear of being killed as she is now believed to be a witch.

It seems that the reason behind subjecting Sabina to this violence was her brother-in-law's designs on her property. He threw her out of the house she owned and took over the fields that she worked on. The village sided with the brother-in-law due to the belief they had in witchcraft, which made it easier for the brother-in-law to take over Sabina's property, leaving her to fend for herself.

Kalomani Devi is from Khunti district of Jharkhand. She left the village 35 years ago with her husband and went to live in Ranchi. They began living in a rented house, where, after seven miscarriages, she finally had two children—a son and a daughter. Her husband, Kisnu, worked in a nearby factory, while she made a living by selling peanuts, puffed rice (*muri*), and chickpeas.

Her brother-in-law Buddhiram came to Hatia to stay with them where he could study. Soon after completing his studies, he got a job. Kalomani's husband had another brother who died. In November 2009, Kalomani's husband also died. When she returned to the village with her husband's body, Buddhiram began shouting that she was a witch and that she had 'eaten up' his brother. This behaviour shocked Kalomani, as, instead of helping her out during this difficult time, her brother-in-law was throwing tantrums. The people around them managed to calm Buddhiram, and Kalomani was able to perform the cremation rites. After the cremation was over, Kalomani realized that Buddhiram was approaching her to hurt her, so she ran away and returned to Hatia. After some time, when she returned to the village to finish the final rites of her husband, she found Buddhiram waiting for her at the bus stop to beat her up. She managed to escape from there but could not complete the last rites for her husband. She was very upset and thought that if her in-laws had been alive, they would have done something. She is of the opinion that her brother-in-law did this so that he could take control of all the land that was originally meant for all three brothers. Currently, Kalomani Devi has no share of the land. Buddhiram has occupied the family home and taken all the land for himself. She cannot return to the village as she feels her brother-in-law will kill her. She has returned to her maternal village and is presently living and working there.

Sukri was a resident of Ranchi district in Jharkhand state, where she lived with her husband, Jogesh Munda. Sukri's husband died of an illness and left her to raise their five children—three boys and two girls. The children have all grown up now and are doing well. Sukri's husband was well known in the village as he was the eldest in his family and thus had a lot of responsibilities. After he passed away, the in-laws began to behave very badly with Sukri because an *ojha* told the family that it was due to her that Jogesh Munda had died. They began calling Sukri a witch. Nobody would help her or take her side. They left her to work in the field and do all the farming alone. During that period, a neighbour, Balahi Devi, thrice gave birth to still-born children. Balahi's family blamed Sukri for the deaths of the babies.

By making her incur expenses to do various rituals to ward off evil and take the evil spirit out of her, all her land was taken from her. She only had her house left to her. She started to live in a deplorable condition. Whenever anything bad happened in the village, Sukri was blamed. She was not allowed to take part in functions or be part of festivities in the village. She was unhappy and lived a miserable life, always staying inside her house. She passed away in 2014. The reason for subjecting Sukri to such torture was to take away her land and wealth. The villagers could not tolerate her trying to earn a living on her own and wanted her to be dependent on them.

Jealousy

The second most frequently occurring factor in witch accusations is that of jealousy. Jealousy is not something new. It was mentioned as a factor in witch accusations in the 1850s, early in the colonial era and well before the substantial inroads of capitalist relations (Mallick 2017). At that time, it was related to having more food and fields that were more productive. The latter could well have been due to the family being more diligent in managing its agricultural operations. In any case, jealousy did not just come up with capitalist differentiation. Of course, jealousy has now become wider. It can be related to any kind of difference, of children doing better in school or having a migrant daughter or son who sends some money home. Among the young women who work in Delhi and Gurugram, we have seen the fear of jealousy—their attempts to please as many relatives as possible, their attempts to hide their savings or the extra money they give to their immediate family, and the tensions they feel as they periodically go back home.

George Foster (1972) made a distinction between jealousy and envy. However, we do not find such a distinction useful. In fact, there is only one Hindi word, *jalan*, which can be used for both envy and jealousy. In the

Munda language, there is the word *hisinga* for envy or jealousy. This came into play if any one family, other than the village head or village priest, had clearly accumulated more than others. Such a family could then be forced to feast the whole village—a feast that would often result in this family going down to the ranks of the poorest in the village. Now, such feasting for the village is no longer the way to deal with jealousy. It has been replaced by often deadly witch hunts.

Rameliya, a resident of Ranchi district, was a victim of witchcraft-related violence. She had been married into the Khoya family, which was quite well off. Rameliya was the only daughter of her parents and had recently been married to a man of her own choice. She was happy and living a peaceful life. However, the villagers started to call Rameliya a witch because her father-in-law used to make medicines and perform religious rituals that were different from the ones performed by the rest of the villagers. The people started to say that Rameliya also had knowledge of witchcraft. The *ojha* in the village also referred to her as a witch.

Rameliya was very upset and angry about this behaviour. The jealousy of the villagers has led to them calling her a witch. She does not like the *ojha*s either because she believes that their so-called powers are just a myth and they think of themselves as being greater than the gods they worship. According to Rameliya, people just blindly follow these healers, leading to everyone believing in things that are not true. The people do not like the fact that her family has given her independence and also that the family is living happily and doing well. She is now tense about the situation as the villagers have threatened her and her family to stop spreading evil. The reasons for the incident are an old fight in the village, the fact that Rameliya's family has given the women independence, and jealousy because the family is well off.

Dhoorni Devi is from Bokaro district of Jharkhand state. Dhoorni Devi and her husband, Tirku Mahto, were happily married, living a comfortable life with their five children—three boys and two girls. They would cultivate their land and also work as wage labourers which provided them with extra money and helped them secure a good life for themselves and their children. Their children went to school and were getting a good education. The daughters were growing up to help Dhoorni Devi in household work, in looking after the home, and in keeping it clean and tidy. The relatives of Dhoorni Devi did not like this and became jealous of her lifestyle. They began telling other people that she was too proud of her wealth.

Unfortunately, Dhoorni Devi's husband fell ill and did not survive. She was devastated, and during that time, her brother-in-law and sister-in-law began blaming her for the death. They accused her of all the ills that had befallen

the family. Despite these accusations, Dhoorni Devi continued her children's education and maintained a normal lifestyle. Even this was not taken well by her relatives. They could not stand the fact that she was living a normal life and earning a sufficient amount of money. They began cursing her, calling her a witch, and saying that she was the reason for family members falling ill and not being happy.

When she tried to have the family land divided to give her a separate plot, the family protested and said she was trying to destroy the family name. They abused her and questioned her about having affairs with men at the place she worked. This broke Dhoorni Devi, and the relatives took away her land and house. She was left homeless and now she does not have a place to live. Her children have found work elsewhere and have started living their own lives.

The main reason for this incident is the jealousy of Dhoorni Devi's relatives about the lifestyle led by Dhoorni Devi and her husband. These relatives could not tolerate others doing well in life and prospering. After her husband's death, they wanted to take over the land and found a way to blame Dhoorni Devi and subjected her to torture and denouncing her as a witch.

Birki, a woman accused of being a witch, has been living in Rajasthan since her marriage. The reason why she was called a witch is very intriguing. In modern Rajasthan, the Bhil indigenous community is regarded to be a 'very backward' indigenous community. However, in historical records, we see that it is this community that has helped kings to acquire land and have victories. They have been warriors for kings and helped them in winning important battles. Birki had a progressive mindset, so she had her children educated properly. The village in which Birki resides is a Rajput-dominated village. Birki's son Ramesh is a teacher in the same village, something the Rajputs (warrior, upper caste) did not like.

When researchers tried to find out why Birki had been called a witch, it was found out that the Rajput youth of the village were largely illiterate and many of them suffered from different kinds of addictions. It is because of this that these people had sold the land they had inherited. Now, they were leading a life of poverty. To add to this, when Ramesh used to drive a motorcycle in the village, they became jealous because they did not have the money to afford one. Ramesh also dressed up like a Rajput with a moustache, which made them even more jealous.

Birki and her family were forced to move out of their house and live in the farmland because the other villagers did not want someone from the Bhil community to live in a house in the middle of the village. The target of all such actions has usually been the women and the children of the family. Once, a large number of villagers attacked the Bhil family while they were asleep at night. They beat up the family members and dragged Birki out of

the house. They accused her of being a witch because of whom their children were unwell. The Bhil family informed the police of the incident but no action was taken against the villagers. After this, because of the bad attitude of the villagers and the violence faced by them, the family moved out of the village and started living on their farmland.

Causing illness

Ramaliya was a resident of Ranchi district of Jharkhand who was accused of being a witch. She had been married to Bhiku. In 2014, some villagers were on their way to a wedding. The vehicle (a three-wheeler mini truck) turned upside down and a bad accident occurred, leading to the death of four villagers. The people contacted an *ojha* and he informed them that the cause of the accident was a woman witch in the village whose house was facing south. The villagers blamed Ramaliya Oraon and started to beat her. They were so angry and agitated that they wanted to kill her. They held a *panchayat* meeting where some opposed the killing as they would be imprisoned. Therefore, they did not do anything further. Although the villagers were no longer attacking her, Ramaliya did not like the way people would behave towards her. She was shaken and her self-respect was hurt. She left the village and moved to a place where she works in a brick kiln.

Aged about 55 years, Mariyam is a widow from the Santhal community. She lives in the Deoghar district of Jharkhand state. She also has a son named Rohan Murmu. After the death of her husband, Mariyam is somehow surviving with her son by farming on some arable land of her total landholding, which is about three acres. Mariyam is being regularly harassed by her neighbours, who allege that she is a witch. Whenever someone falls sick and dies in the village, she is blamed for it. A few days before our fieldwork, her neighbours had beaten her up claiming that she was a witch. When Mariyam sought the help of other villagers, they declined. At last, Mariyam registered a case in the court. The judgment is still awaited. However, some of her neighbours in the village harass her by calling her a witch. Life has become miserable for her because of the incessant accusations, which increase every time something bad happens in the village.

A year ago, her nephew's son fell sick. Holding her responsible for the illness, the nephew went to her house and abused her. He also threatened to kill her if his son failed to recover from the sickness. Mariyam was terrified by the threat. Next day in the early morning, she rushed to some progressive people of the village with her problem. People listened to her and a *panchayat* (village assembly) was convened. However, her relatives in the village refused

to abide by the *panchayat*'s ruling. Feeling helpless, she took the issue to the police. Taking cognizance of her complaint, officials from the police station reached the village and investigated the matter. However, no arrest was made; nonetheless, she was allowed to live in the village.

Balahi, aged about 55 years, along with her disabled husband, Robin Tudu, has been living a hard life in the Santhal Parganas region of Jharkhand state. In 2016, the neighbours called Balahi a witch. Whenever someone in the village suffered a stomach ache, fever, or other illness, people tortured her by calling her a witch. One day, 8–10 villagers were taken unconscious all at once. The *ojha* who was consulted blamed Balahi for it. Her neighbour called her and asked her to revive them immediately or he would kill her. This neighbour and some other men got agitated and beat up Balahi and her husband. The next morning, Balahi narrated her miseries to the other villagers. They interrogated the alleged perpetrators, who denied the charge. Balahi, who is poor, landless, and illiterate, did not have the means to approach the police.

Assertion of independence by women

This case is from Jashpur district in Chhattisgarh. The events of this case took place in 2014. Mariam is a 45-year-old Christian married woman and is a high school graduate. After the marriage, she realized that there was some land. She asked her husband about this land and started making enquiries. She found out that his land had been falsely acquired by a certain John. Upon questioning him, John suggested that Mariam stay in his house and leave her husband, but Mariam refused. Mariam started working as a manual labourer. As she was literate and articulate, Mariam was chosen as a ward member in the *gram panchayat* (village council). This did not go down well with some of the villagers who did not like Mariam's position and wanted to undermine her. John, who held a grudge against Mariam, decided to label her as a witch. One Sunday in June, after attending church, the villagers started calling Mariam a witch. Mariam did not react and went home. After a few days, a government scheme for wells was initiated and Mariam filled out the forms for the villagers who needed them.

On the day when the approvals for different schemes were to be distributed, the villagers started fighting and called Mariam a witch in front of the development officer. John hit out at Mariam and accused her of putting a spell on the villagers who did not get their approvals under the scheme. Mariam had also rescued an orphan child who was being treated as a slave by some of the villagers. This jealousy and resentment led to Mariam being

labelled as a witch. Mariam was forced to resign from her post as a member of the *gram panchayat*. Mariam is very troubled but still has not registered a case for being labelled a witch.

Sarita was a resident of Raipur district in Chhattisgarh state. She was 23 years old when her parents died, and she was left to look after herself and her two younger brothers. She took on all the responsibilities at that young age and did not take any help or support from her extended family. She worked hard on the fields and also took care of household chores. She sold the vegetables she grew and earned good money. She was slowly becoming successful and was able to afford a tractor for herself. By operating the tractor, she was able to do more and faster work. The villagers said that an evil spirit had entered her, which is why she was able to do so much work.

Sarita was also making her brothers go to school and providing them with an education. In 2015, a resident of the village died and Sarita was blamed for the incident. She was tortured and asked to admit that she was a witch. However, Sarita refused to confess. That night, four or five men came to her house and gang-raped her. She went to the police station for help and to file a complaint. However, they did not provide her any support. This left Sarita completely broken and she committed suicide.

Chunki and her husband, Baseel, were residents of Ranchi district in Jharkhand state. They also have a son, Jatin. In 2012, Chunki's husband died, and she was left alone to take care of herself and her son. The only source of income for her was farming. She would work the whole day in the fields, cultivating crops, tilling the land, and doing everything herself. She would come home tired and exhausted. After that, she would cook and clean and tend to her son. Her son had passed his high school examinations and wished to study further; however, after clearing the examination, he started to work so that he could support his mother. The villagers were getting jealous of her. They resented the fact that she could manage on her own and be independent, so they began calling her a witch.

Jhalo Bai is a 45-year-old married Dalit woman in Chhattisgarh. Since Jhalo Bai could not conceive, she had decided to do social work. Taking the advice of an *anganwadi sevika* (crèche worker), she had formed a self-help group (SHG) in the village and connected it to the block-level office. Over time, Jhalo Bai formed SHGs in 10 villages and worked tirelessly to resolve village-related problems. Under the consultation of the *panchayat*, she took certain matters to the block (sub-district) level. Slowly, people in the block and district offices started recognizing her and respecting her. The lifestyle of Jhalo Bai changed due to the frequent interactions she had with people in administration. Under Jhalo Bai's influence, her husband stopped drinking.

Her brother-in-law and his wife got very jealous of her and started accusing Jhalo Bai of being a witch. The villagers started to throw rice at her but she always thought it was by accident. Jhalo Bai is unclear about when exactly she was labelled a witch. The accusations spread slowly. In May 2015, a man died in the village and Jhalo Bai was blamed for it. People in the village stopped talking to her and her family was boycotted.

Jhalo Bai's husband does manual labour to earn his living. She used to work hard to earn her living, but as she had no children she was labelled a witch by other women living in her neighbourhood. They then excluded her from the work of the community service group. She did not receive the loans which were provided to villagers by the government. Jhalo Bai could not even find work as a manual labourer. Ramesh, the brother-in-law, claimed that Jhalo Bai tried to attract all the men in their house. He also said that all the animals in the house died after Jhalo Bai entered their house. Jhalo Bai believes that there is no need to waste her energy in convincing the villagers that she is not a witch. However, she says, the motivation for working for the community has died within her.

Balhi, a widow, was a resident of Ranchi district in Jharkhand state. She has four children—two girls and two boys. Three of her children are married and one girl is still unmarried. Around 2004, her eldest son died. Soon after, her second son and the two daughters-in-law also died. The relatives of the family blamed Balhi and began calling her a witch. They accused her of being the reason behind her children's deaths. People took her to multiple *ojha*s who all said that Balhi was a witch. The *panchayat* held a meeting and decided that she would have to give money towards the construction of a temple. She should also work for the villagers and make food for everyone. She had to sell all her farmland and animals for paying these costs.

She became extremely poor and was left with a small piece of land. After a year, her brother-in-law also died. Once again, Balhi was blamed for the death, accused of doing black magic, and beaten up. She was made to leave the village. Even though she did not want to leave, she had to because of the threats of the villagers. She had no one left in her family, and her land was taken over by the government where a community hall was built. She had been leading a happy life, but after her husband died, everything changed. She died in 2014 due to starvation.

The villagers did not like the fact that Balhi was leading an independent life. She had managed to live comfortably and bring up her children. The villagers also wanted her land and wealth, and came up with these accusations to take all of it from her.

Sexual abuse/resisting sexual advances

Sabita, aged 20 years, is married to a resident of Bhilwada, Rajasthan. After marriage, things were normal for one month. No sooner did one month end than her father-in-law's intentions changed. He suggested that Sabita should have a sexual relationship with him. Sabita refused his proposal, saying that she would tell her husband. However, to her surprise, after listening to all the incidents, her husband supported his father and blamed her for making false statements against his father. When her father-in-law did not succeed in his intentions, he started to create an unhealthy environment for Sabita in the house. He started to call her an ominous witch who would brutally kill the family. Sabita was subjected to rounds of torture. She was locked in a room for an entire day. Her hands and legs were burnt using hot iron rods and heavy stones were tied to her waist. She was compelled to eat ash and beaten by her father-in-law when she refused to do all these things. Her health started deteriorating because of the continuous violence. One day, due to this continuous torture, she fainted. Her mother was informed by someone about the incident. She came to Sabita's in-laws' house to take her away. Sabita's in-laws were ready to send her home on the condition that she would not say anything to the police. However, as Sabita's health continued to fail, her mother admitted her to a hospital and lodged a complaint against Sabita's husband and her in-laws at the local police station. The next day this news made the headlines as it was covered by local and state-level media. At that point, a proper investigation was conducted. All the accused were presented in court by the police and the court sent them to prison.

Revati is a resident of Bokaro district in Jharkhand. She has been a victim of sexual abuse and violence caused by witchcraft accusations. The incident began 35 years ago. Revati was married to Chhagan. Even after five years of marriage, Revati had been unable to conceive. The in-laws abused and tortured her. They called her a witch and blamed her for being the reason why she could not conceive. Revati would do all the house work as well as work on the farm. When she would be in the fields, the men of the village would come and take advantage of her. They gave money to her husband for him to go away and drink, while they would rape and abuse her. They said that Revati was there to be sexually exploited by the villagers; she was called a witch.

When one of the relatives had a baby, she wanted to go and bless the child. However, when she reached the house, people started abusing her and beating her. They said that since she could not have her own children, she had come to spoil another family's happiness. Revati is very broken and has lost all hope of living a happy life. She does not want anything but death to come

to her. She thinks that the men are trying to cover up their actions of sexual abuse by calling her a witch. The villagers (some of whom are her abusers) find fault in her and see the sexual abuse as infidelity on her part.

Unconventional or different religious practices

Sukri is an indigenous woman aged about 24 years. She is in a live-in relationship with Hembron of Ranchi district in Jharkhand. The village is around 20 kilometres from the district headquarters. They are not married, but she has been staying with Hembron for the last three years. Though their relationship was not approved by the villagers, they were not ostracized for it. Sukri and her partner were casual labourers. Sukri is a good friend of Rosa, and they used to spend their leisure time together.

In another village, Malti convinced Rosa to practise chanting hymns for the well-being of her family. As a close friend of Rosa, Sukri also convinced two other women to practise the chanting of indigenous hymns. After a few months, Rosa and Sukri started disregarding the village headman. They told him that he could not harm them as they were practising the hymns to *bonga*, an indigenous spirit. The headman and his followers felt that if women stopped respecting the headman, they would lose their hold on the village. The *ojha* started spreading rumours that there would be danger for the villagers if this witchcraft was not stopped.

A meeting was called where all the four women who chanted hymns were called. When Sukri was asked why she disrespected the headman, she said that she had the blessings of *bonga* and so she would show respect to *bonga* only. The headman asked her to prove that she had these blessings in front of the villagers by calling the spirit to her body. She could not call the spirit by using hymns. Her brothers were also present in the meeting. They felt insulted and started beating Sukri in front of the gathering. The police were called who rescued the women. No FIR (first information report) was lodged with the police, but a warning was issued. Sukri and Rosa migrated from the village to the neighbouring district and are now working there.

Gumti Bai is a 70-year-old widow, the mother of six children—four daughters and two sons. She resides in Komaram Bheem district of Telangana state. They have four acres of land that is distributed equally between the two sons. Gumti Bai has always been a very religious woman and follows her traditions diligently. She uses turmeric powder and lemon for her prayers, which she offers to the religious tree called Jangu Bai. She follows her own ways and does not adhere to village traditions. This made the villagers very unhappy and they interpreted her ways as being those of one who practised witchcraft.

After some time, Gumti Bai's husband died due to an illness. The villagers blamed Gumti Bai for the death of her husband and accused her of being a witch. They socially boycotted her. When three other people in the village died of viral fever, Gumti Bai was blamed and accused again.

After the social boycott, Gumti Bai's sons did not come to her rescue. Gumti Bai shifted to her elder daughter's home as she lived nearby. Gumti Bai gets a widow pension of 1,000 rupees, which her elder daughter takes—the daughter even uses Gumti Bai's ration card facilities. Gumti Bai is only given two simple meals a day by her daughter. Gumti Bai's act of following her religious traditions, which was different from what other people in the village did, made people boycott her and be cruel towards her. However, gradually, with more awareness being spread about this matter, the social boycott has stopped and Gumti Bai's sons have started visiting her again.

Asking for dues

The following two cases are from Rajasthan. They involve inter-caste relations between castes that had been in *jajmani* (patron–client) relations, that is, involved in exchanges of goods and services. Kabita, a woman from a Kumbhar (potter caste) family, was friendly with some peasant high-caste families across the street. One day they called her to their house and asked her to treat and cure a woman who was not well. When she said that she did not know how to treat the woman, they beat her and called her a witch. They said she had caused the illness. The day before this, she had gone to this house to get her petticoat stitched, a service that was traditionally provided to her, but the family had told her that the sewing machine was not working. They accused her of using this refusal to make the woman in their family sick and insisted that she is a witch and has caused this illness. If she did not cure her, she had to leave the village. When we visited her in 2017, she was living in an isolated hut, 6 kilometres from the village. The Kumbhars are a minority in this village, with just 4 Kumbhar residents out of the total of 150.

Meena belongs to the Natt community (entertainer caste). The main occupation of this caste is to entertain by dancing, singing, rope-walking, and performing in people's houses during marriages or other festivities, for which they get money or foodgrain. Their nutrition and well-being are dependent on the money and grain they get from these households. It is because of this the Natts are always dependent on the so-called upper caste people to call them for the festivities and marriage ceremonies.

Due to the helplessness of members of her caste, the consequences of this domination were felt by Meena. She had gone to collect her dues from the house of Chandu and Deviram, as they had a wedding in their house.

They refused to give her money or foodgrain. Disappointed by the refusal, when she was returning to her house, Chandu and Deviram attacked her. They forced her to lick their feet and to come to their house. In the house, she played with the child. The inference of her playing with the child was taken to mean that she had put the child under the influence of some bad spirits. They forced her to admit that she was a witch and that she was responsible for the child being possessed by a bad spirit. The two men beat Meena up so badly that she was constantly muttering that she should be forgiven and left alone, and that she would never ask for foodgrain or money from them. She apologized to them and begged them to leave her, but they did not listen to her, until she openly admitted that she was a witch

Interaction

There are three main features of witch persecutions discussed here. First is that of different ways of re-casting gender relations in the concerned communities. Second is that of different ways of relating to the development in transitioning to new market-based economies in indigenous areas. Third is that of accusations of causing bodily harm alone. The accusation of harm is common to all the cases and is the starting point of the witch persecution. In some 83 per cent of the cases, besides the accusation of causing harm, there was also some other factor that was understood as the background to the accusation, such as jealousy or the seizing of land to be accumulated in the patrilineage. However, in 17 per cent of the cases, there did not seem to be any such additional factor; the only accusation was that of causing sickness. These seem to be the pure cases of accusations of causing harm through supernatural powers, while in the other cases there are also additional gendered processes of socio-economic change.

There is a link between the three sets of factors. The culture of seeing women as evil and causing harm by supernatural knowledge or force translates into the persecution of women as witches. This persecution itself becomes a process through which gender relations are recast as patriarchal (that is, male control over productive assets/resources and decision-making). In addition, when there is an attack on persons who are thought to have illegally/immorally accumulated wealth or doing better than relatives and neighbours, it is most often the woman of the family who is denounced as a witch who is supposed to have used supernatural powers to cause harm to others as well as act against the economically better off. It is these three factors—the cultural belief of women as the source of supernatural powers that can be used to cause harm, the re-casting of gender relations as patriarchal, and dealing with wealth and inequality—that together constitute the gendered socio-economic dimensions of the witch hunts in central India.

PATRIARCHY

A Connected History of Patriarchy and Witch Hunts

5

Our attempt in this chapter is to bring history into the understanding of the creation of patriarchal relations among indigenous peoples. Comaroff and Comaroff (1999: xviii) acknowledge the prior or pre-modern existence of witch persecutions but do not give it any historical importance. From these materials, however, we would like to understand the character of witch struggles and their relation with patriarchal structures in indigenous societies. This, of course, does not mean that the indigenous peoples were not in contact with the larger religio-cultural societies around them, nor that their economies were self-contained without any trading relations with statist and other communities around them. The region of central India, including Jharkhand, supplied elephants that were used for both war and ceremonial purposes by more complex societies around them (K. S. Singh 1987). In the nineteenth century, at the time of the Munda revolt led by Birsa Munda, the Mundas as well as other indigenous peoples of central India were suppliers of lac to the British Empire.

The indigenous peoples were not isolated from the dominant sociocultural systems in the subcontinent, even to the extent that some of these communities lost their own original language. Verrier Elwin pointed out that the Baigas of Chhattisgarh, India, had lost all traces of their Austro-Asiatic language and spoke the languages of their neighbours (Elwin 1991). As Aloka Parasher points out in general about the indigenous societies in India in the period up to 600 CE, 'those who were called the *mlechha* [the barbarian or indigenous peoples] groups lived in relative, but not absolute isolation from the dominant culture of the Indian sub-continent' (Parasher 1991). So too the indigenous peoples of Yunnan and the Chinese northwest who to the Han Chinese were either 'black barbarians' or 'white barbarians', but were in contact with.

What difference does the acknowledgement of contact between indigenous peoples and the dominant cultures around them make to the analysis of witch hunts? For one, it points to the possibility of some ideas about evil humans having been introduced from outside the indigenous culture, and not just a result of internal changes. With regard to the Muria of central India, Verrier Elwin pointed out that in the original Muria tradition, the enemy of mankind is usually a man and that the belief in female witches was a later introduction from Hindu beliefs (Elwin 1991; Sundar 2001).

Among the Austro-Asiatic communities of central India, the word for witch, *dakhini*, is a word of Indo-European origin (Chatterji 1970: 308). *Dakhini* is said to originally have been the highest deity, but was later condemned as an anti-social and evil spirit (personal communication, Samar Bosu-Mullick). This is an instance of what was understood as superior knowledge being turned into its opposite of evil knowledge. Much more work needs to be done to understand the connection between the incorporation of the Indo-European word *dakhini* into the languages and myths of the Austro-Asiatic communities. The word *dayani* is also used by the Khasi, a matrilineal community in northeast India also speaking an Austro-Asiatic language (personal communication, Patricia Mukhim).

Connected history, however, does not mean the extinction of the distinction between 'external imposition' and 'internal impulse' as argued, for instance, by Pierre Bourdieu (1998). The same connected, external impulse may result in different outcomes, depending on different internal impulses and how different sections or genders react to the external impulse. For instance, among the Naxi of Lijiang, Yunnan, China, at the time of the imposition of Han rule in 1723, according to the Naxi anthropologist-historian Guo Dalie (1997), the Naxi were already patrilineal. There were some elements of male domination, including the denunciation of women as keepers of ghosts or demons (Yang 1993), corresponding to what in English would be called witches.

When the Confucian ethical code for women of three obediences (to father before marriage, to husband in marriage, and to son after husband's death) and four virtues (morality, proper speech, modest manner, and diligent work) was imposed, men welcomed it much more than women. The Confucian system was also reflected in marriage arranged by parents, rather than for love, as earlier existed among the Naxi. The imposition of Confucian arranged marriage and its rejection by many led to the phenomenon of 'suicide for love', where couples would commit suicide rather than separate from each other. However, more women opposed the Confucian marriage system. Although it was difficult to get detailed statistics, Yang Fuqian argued that

'one sign that the number of women committing suicide was more than that of men was that in many villages, there were numerous incidents of women dying for love all alone or in a group of women' (Yang 1993). Peter Goullart, who had stayed in Lijiang for a number of years before the formation of the People's Republic of China, mentions in his book *The Forgotten Kingdom* (1950) that the cases of women dying for love were more than those of men, and that women were more resolute in this than men. Furthermore, many of those who committed suicide were from families where women had been denounced as keepers of evil spirits, or *chau pu xi* (Yang 1993).

The point from the above example is to show that the existing internal conditions, that of an already existing male dominance in some spheres, reflected in the culture of women being witches or potential keepers of demons, were reflected in the cultural outcome occasioned by the introduction of Confucian values, including the marriage system. That more women than men died for love can be understood with the initial condition in which there was already male domination in some spheres and that men probably resisted the Confucian system less than women, who had much to lose with both the arranged marriage system and the imposition of the various Confucian rules for life. Initial conditions, different across communities, do matter in the outcomes of external impulses or impositions. Furthermore, the new impulses may work to extend gender domination from one sphere of social existence to other spheres via witch hunts.

Witch hunts in indigenous societies

Before coming to witch hunts in contemporary India, we will take up witch hunts in the colonial period. Our material is from the Santhal and Munda indigenous peoples in what is now the state of Jharkhand. Numerous women and girls were accused of witchcraft and killed during the anti-colonial rebellions. This was a period of contact of the Santhal with British colonialism, but the account of the origin of witches among the Santhal shows the likely indigenous nature of the belief.

There were two major anti-colonial movements among the indigenous peoples of central India, the first that of the Santhal *hul* (rebellion) in 1855 and again in 1857, the latter, during India's First War of Independence. The second was the Birsa Munda–led Munda *ulgulan* (also meaning rebellion) at the end of the nineteenth century. These anti-colonial movements aimed at ending colonial rule. They also had specific provocations, such as the attempt of the British to take over uncultivated community forest lands as state forests in the Munda area. However, along with these anti-colonial

movements there were also witch hunts. One of the songs during the Munda rebellion included witches along with the Europeans and other castes as enemies to be killed:

> O kill the witch, such the poison,
> O kill, kill
> O Father, kill the Europeans, the other castes
> O kill, kill. (K. S. Singh, quoted in Sinha 2007: 1675)

How do we understand these witch hunts? Shashank Sinha in his analysis of the 1857 Santhal rebellion places them in the category of James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (2007). Ata Mallick (2008) disputes this, and going through court records of that period she was able to bring forward the voice of those whom she terms the 'silenced minority' among the indigenous peoples, women victims and their male relatives who were opposed to and scared of the witch hunts.

In the first place, the Santhal witch hunts took place in the background of the colonial authorities' attempts to punish witch hunting and deter witch hunts, which they found occurring when they conquered the area. There was, thus, the idea that the British supported the witches, as again we find in colonial Africa. During the rebellion and in the context of the broader War of Independence, there was a weakening of colonial authority. One of the witch killers is quoted as saying, 'We saw ourselves that there was great confusion, fighting and killing and we determined to kill our wizards and witches', especially as they '… knew that the Sahibs [colonial rulers] hanged for such work, but we thought there would be no more such hanging' (Mallick 2008: 119).

Many of the accused witches sought protection from the British colonial authorities. Chotrae Deshmanji testified, 'We all were afraid seeing such things. My two brothers suggested that we should leave the place immediately because we too have women and girls. They might be identified as witches' (Mallick 2008: 119).

There is another school of thought which says that the witch hunts had nothing anti-colonial about them. They base their analysis on the voices of the survivors. One woman who had escaped, while her family was killed, said to the court, 'I believe that they killed them, because we were better-off than most of other and usually had more grain and better crops than anyone else' (quoted in Mallick 2008: 119). As Mallick points out, and as we found in our case studies, it is the relatives of the victims or survivors who come out with the background factors in the witch accusations.

The point of bringing in this colonial history is to show that witch hunts existed at the beginning of colonial rule. It was because the colonial rulers found ongoing witch hunts that they instituted anti-witch hunting laws. Thus, these witch hunts and beliefs predate colonial rule. Jealousy, which was found to be a factor in witch hunts, was not created either by colonial rule or capitalist modernity for that matter. Of course, the contexts of jealousy kept changing as these societies underwent socio-economic transformation, whether forced or otherwise. The manner of witch hunts also changed. While earlier the witches alone were killed, in this period entire families of accused witches were killed (Mallick 2008). In addition, witches, while mainly women, were also men, though the Santhal myth, which we discuss in the next chapter, clearly identifies women alone as witches. These are points that we will discuss over the next few chapters.

Dalton, a British army officer and administrator, writing in the 1860s, says about the Ho that 'it is not only women that are accused of having dealings with the imps of darkness. Persons of the opposite sex are as frequently denounced; nor are the victims of the orthodox old hag type' (1872: 198). John Hoffman, a missionary, whose work is based on observation in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, mentions that witches are generally old women, and 'men are less liable to these suspicions, though the existence of wizards is also believed in' (1950: 2920). As for the Santhal, Paul Bodding, writing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and others before him all pointed out that Santhal witches were exclusively women.

Half a century later, in Malda district of West Bengal, from 1950 to 1980 there were 46 cases of killings of witches (Chaudhuri 1987: 160). Of these, 42 were women, but we do not know whether the 4 men were killed as being related to the accused women. But it is likely that things had begun to change and men too were being attacked as witches.

Trend and deviations

Before we go on to discuss the main features of the gender system in indigenous societies, we will first take up the question of the meaning of men being the victims of witch hunts. When women make up most of those identified as witches, that uniformity needs to be explained, provided, of course, we accept that the objective of the historical–anthropological analysis is to explain uniformities and not just describe them. However, there are societies where men too are denounced as witches, and there are societies where men alone are denounced as witches. These deviations from the trend, from the broad uniformity of women as witches, need explaining. But these

deviations do not mean that there is no trend or broad uniformity. Of course, were the deviations to overwhelm the trend, then one would need another paradigm in the manner of Kuhnian paradigm change.

To give an example of paradigm shift, we can take up the analysis of forager societies. There was the analysis of the primacy of hunting over gathering and the monopoly of men over hunting and the extra-familial distribution of meat, leading to the *Man the Hunter* paradigm (Lee and DeVore 1968). Subsequent analysis, however, showed that gathering in fact contributed more calories to the gatherer-hunter diet (Lee and Daly 1999a), leading to the paradigm of *Woman the Gatherer* (Dahlberg 1983). At the same time, it was pointed out that women often took part in hunting (for evidence from India, see Kelkar, Nathan, and Walter 2003; Singh 2001; for other regions, see Endicott 1999) and also that men too undertook some gathering under certain conditions.

Among gatherer-hunter societies, the relative fluidity of the division of labour along with specialization, as also the distribution of authority over various spheres without the ascription of superiority to any one sphere over the other, leads to the characterization of forager or gatherer-hunter societies as one of relative gender symmetry, of the different but not hierarchically categorized spheres. Within this broad generalization, there would, however, be variations, such as women monopolizing the production sphere or men monopolizing the ritual sphere. These variations would need to be explained.

Witches and witch finders

The Santhal myth of the origin of witches makes women alone witches. Therefore, it is a gender-related phenomenon. All women are socially regarded as potential witches and can be declared such. Attacks on just a few women, in the background of this potential of attacking any woman, would be quite sufficient to make most, or even all, women remain fearful of being so denounced. On the other hand, not any man (only special categories) was subject to being declared a witch. This difference, as we will see, exists in early modern Europe too.

If women became witches, men became witch finders. In the Santhal myth, the Supreme Being, Singbonga, taught men the art of witch finding. Bodding had denounced the Santhal witch finders as 'unmitigated scoundrels', who are able to 'denounce anyone they like' (in O'Malley 1910: 125). Among other indigenous communities too, such as the Munda and Oraon in Jharkhand, the witch finders are only men.

Thus, there is a clear division of labour in these indigenous societies, with enormous social consequences. A division of labour need not itself imply inequality—there can be, in principle, separate but equal spheres. In the case

of the witch complex, however, there is not such a 'separate but equal' system. There is a hierarchy, a disadvantage to being on the side of those who can be declared witches, since persecution and witch hunts are ever-present dangers.

What does our analyses say about the manner in which witch persecutions entered into the creation of patriarchy? The main concern is with the role of witch hunts in bringing about gender hierarchies. Of course, not all gender hierarchies are set up by witch hunts, as we will see with the Baruya of Papua New Guinea (Godelier 1984). But witch hunts can play a role in setting up a gender hierarchy, with regard to contributing labour to natal or marital families. More important, however, is the role of witch persecutions or the threat of witch accusations in reinforcing conformity to patriarchal gender norms or the norms that prevail in a society.

Gendering women as evil

For women to be the witches, there needs to be a basis in women as evil, or the gendering of evil. Among the indigenous peoples of central India, among the Munda, Ho, and Oraon, both women and men can cause evil, while among the Santhal only women can cause evil. But even among the Oraon who believe that both women and men can cause evil, it is women who, in the main, are supposed to cause evil (Joshi et al. 2006). This is, at times, related to beliefs about women's weakness, which supposedly makes them prone to use magical practices to compensate for their weakness.

Among the Santhal, however, it is women alone who can be evil and who also need to be controlled—they are not weak, as with the other communities, but need to be controlled since they have the power to do harm. In this myth, women acquired the evil power of 'eating men' or causing harm. This then also becomes the origin of evil within human society.

Denying women the right to own land

Agriculture is the main source of products, followed by forest products, which are often exchanged for other products, such as salt and metal implements. In our earlier analysis of witch persecution in Jharkhand, there was a clear connection to eliminating women's rights to land (Kelkar and Nathan 1991). Women, as widows, had substantial user rights in land. These rights were extinguished through witch persecutions and the land then passed on to male heirs of the husband. In a largely non-monetized economy, accumulation took place in land; the labour of women and her children were manifested in land. Seizing land was the method of taking over whatever accumulation had

taken place. Our case studies show that this was often the case with witch persecutions in central India. Consequently, witch persecutions were one manner in which the land rights of women were extinguished, and women were turned into a class of persons whose access to land (and other property) '... is mediated through their sexual ties to a man. It is through the man that women have access or are denied access to the means of production and to resources' (Lerner 1986: 215).

While women could access land only through men, there was an area of production where women could have independent access to resources. That was in the gathering of forest products, whether for consumption or for sale. As many of our case studies show, even when women were evicted from their land, they had continued access to forest resources. Even in a marital situation, women continued to have some limited control over their income from forest produce. But there was the culture—the social norm that such independent income should be used for the benefit of the family, thus delimiting the manner in which women could use income they controlled.

There is also a deterioration of women's land rights, particularly as widows. Early studies of witch accusations and persecutions showed a preponderance of widows. Not only are widows weak but there have also been attempts of the deceased husbands' paternal kin to evict the widows and retain the land in the patrilineage. Witch accusations and persecutions have played a role in preserving land in the patrilineage.

Land, inheritance, and patrilineality

Land is a key resource in an agricultural community. It is the base for using one's labour in producing for subsistence. Besides being a productive resource, land, or ownership of land, is an identification of a person as a full member of the indigenous community. Ownership of land means 'her recognition as an individual, with rights in the children, household and the community, and her right to resist being relegated to the objective role of a wife' (Rao 2008: 5). Indigenous women, other than in matrilineal communities, are usually denied the right to own land. Govind Kelkar and Maithreyi Krishnaraj argue 'when women gain control over land, they gain the independence necessary to exercise their agency, confront injustice and inequality, and acquire power to pursue productive livelihoods. An asset effect can change the way people think and interact in day-to-day life' (Kelkar and Krishnaraj 2012: 3). If there are any moves for women to own land, the social norms come into play stating that 'Good women do not inherit land', as in the title of Nitya Rao's book (2008). These norms tend to diminish women's power with their hold on people's attitudes.

The Mundari-speaking peoples of Jharkhand were patrilineal at the time of early colonial contact in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when Christian missionaries wrote about them. But despite patrilineal land inheritance, there were substantial areas of women's, specifically widows', rights over land. This ranged from a right to maintenance to a lifetime right over land.

The life interest of a widow in her husband's land restricts the property rights of the male agnates of her deceased husband. They have to wait until the death of the widow for their use of this land for accumulation or for consumption. In case the widow has sons, the heirs are her own children. But a widow without children, however, has only a life interest and is also vulnerable to attack. This life interest came in the way of an immediate patrilineal inheritance, or one may say in the context of the economy of accumulation, this came in the way of primary accumulation. It is the life interest of a widow in her husband's land that has been most under attack and degraded.

In our case studies, more than one-third, 42 of the total 110 cases, were related to capturing of women's land and other property. We give some cases that are illustrative of the problem that widows face. Sugiya's brother-in-law denounced her as a witch and took over and ploughed her land. After losing her land, she was reduced to collecting leaves from the forest to make and sell leaf bowls. When Kalayati Devi went to conduct the last rites for her husband, her brother-in-law attacked her, forcing her to run away. He has now occupied her land and house. Meno Devi, a widow, was denounced as a witch. The all-male village assembly forced her to feast the whole village with food and alcohol. She was then forced to sign papers giving all her land to her brother-in-law. Ropa Devi, a widow, was blamed for her husband's death. All her land was seized by her brothers-in-law and she was forced to live in a hut by the forest, living by collecting minor forest products.

These cases are not of seizure of women's land by just anybody in the village. Rather, they are seizures by male relatives, usually brothers-in-law on the husbands' side. These are ways of enforcing patrilineal descent, in which the in-marrying women have no right after the husbands' death.

Patrilocality and control over women's income

Patrilineal accumulation also took place through in-marrying women devoting all the fruits of their labour to their marital family. But among the Oraon (now in Bangladesh), even after marriage women continued to maintain relations with their natal kin: 'Their continued position in the natal ... house is expressed in their continued participation in daily household work along

with other female members when they visit their natal homes' (Bleie 1985: 155). In addition, women have some autonomy over spending money from their own earnings. This autonomy in spending their own earnings has been substantial eroded, as data from the 2015–16 National Family Health Survey (NFHS) show. Consequently, '... a continuous negotiation for an alignment of interests between in-married women and men is going on. A powerful mode of making women align ... is the *witchcraft-bisahi* complex' (Bleie 1985: 157). Women who paid too much attention to their natal families were under threat of being denounced as witches. This is a way of enforcing that the labour of wives only accrues to the marital family.

Men's domination of the male farming system is seen in their control of the produce of plough cultivation. In the case of swidden products, there is no sense of it being under women's or men's control. In the case of rice, cultivated with the plough, none other than the male head of the household is allowed to take rice from the bin. This injunction has carried on even into contemporary times, and we were told that even if the husband had gone out for a few days, women would not take rice from the bin. On the contrary, cash income from collection and sale of forest produce belonged to the person who carried out the work. Women, men, and children too had their own respective incomes from the sale of gathered produce, but, as pointed out earlier, the autonomy to spend their own earnings has been substantially eroded.

This system of differences in formal control over different parts of income is very similar to that reported for the Kuasi of north Ghana: 'No other member of the household, except the head, may look or reach inside the granary' (Whitehead 1984: 183). Cash income, however, is wholly owned by the individual and 'no other person has rights to it' (1984: 185).

In indigenous societies in central India, women could also accumulate their own cash income and use it to buy their own movable property: '... they own their own money, goods and cattle. It is more than property on trust, they can dispose of it' (Bodding, in Troisi 1979: IV, 4). This property can be taken by a woman to her husband's home, where it will remain distinctly as her own. But there is a restriction on what she does with her property. It is expected that she will not 'show off' her wealth and use it for the children, husband, and his parents.

Similarly, while a woman can decide her expenditure from her own earnings, there is the expectation that she will use it for the marital household. As mentioned earlier, there is a norm that she should not use her income to benefit her natal family. The manner in which social and cultural norms can restrict formal rights was pointed out by Ann Whitehead for the Kuasi of north Ghana:

> The right of individuals to spend their money how they like is tempered by the practice of and value placed on 'helping others'. The other household members, close kin, or needy neighbours and political allies 'beg for help'. It is much easier for a household head, married man, senior wife, unmarried son or daughters, in that descending order, to hold onto their income. This order reflects the generalized status hierarchy within the complex Kuasi household. (1984: 185)

Among the indigenous peoples in central India, the norm of 'helping others' who are close kin does play a role in setting the limits within which women can spend their own income. More important is the responsibility of women in running the home and feeding the children. A man can ignore household responsibilities and spend a good part of his income on liquor. Of course, his social standing would then suffer. On the contrary, it would be virtually impossible for a woman to ignore her familial responsibilities.

The system of women deciding how to spend their non-agricultural income is under increasing attack. With the growing role of the market economy, individual cash earnings have also grown. Over the past two decades, we have observed a trend for men of these indigenous communities to try to take control of women's income, whether by cajoling or through force. This, however, is still in contrast to the situation in caste society, where even among the so-called lowest castes, the men would, as of right, control the manner in which the entire household income is spent.

In Andhra Pradesh, women from the Jatapu indigenous community reported that they were beaten up or even strip-searched to ensure that they gave up all their earnings or what was left over after household purchases. But in the late 1980s and early 1990s, women were also organizing and fighting back against such beatings by men and attempts to control their earnings. What this successful resistance shows is that it is not necessarily a one-way street to patriarchy. But there is always the threat that women successful in such resistance may be denounced as witches. Women's assertion of an independent income has become an issue in witch persecutions.

The polluting body

The step-by-step categorization of reproductive labour as entirely women's sphere can be seen in the changing notions of pollution—that in some states people are polluting and therefore cannot participate in rites. The most commonly held polluting state is that of menstruation, where the menstrual blood is regarded as something impure or even dangerous.

In the gatherer-hunter Birhor, living along with agriculturist communities in central India, there is no evidence of menstruating women being polluting. But among the agriculturist Munda, men whose wives are pregnant or menstruating can join the ritual spring hunt (*pagu porob*) but cannot get the highly valued head of the animal. The same prohibition holds for communal fishing (Ryuji 1970: 106). The other polluting state is that of birth. Among the gatherer-hunter Birhor, the whole band is polluted by either birth or death. For the Santhal, the whole village would be polluted (Troisi 1979: 85). Among the Ho and Munda, both parents are ritually unclean (Roy [1912] 1985: 119–21).

Is there a hierarchy involved in the notion of pollution? Certain forms of behaviour are prescribed or proscribed for those who are polluting. Some of these, such as isolation, in the case of childbirth, make sense as a practical protection for mother and child. However, this is not a natural but a social practice. The notion of who is polluted changes from the whole band (or village) to the parents and family to just the mother and those attending the birth. The personification of the notion of pollution, so that women are inherently or by definition unclean, is an important aspect of the material and spiritual devaluation of women. This changing notion of pollution creates a hierarchy, and not mere social convenience, as Leacock had argued with regard to menstruating women among hunters (Leacock 1991: 168).

Women's prohibition from political and ritual spheres

In the political sphere of the management of community or village relations, women were excluded from village assemblies. Village assemblies were all men affairs, and women took part only when they were called upon to give testimony. But they took no part in the deliberations and decisions of the village communities. This was so in both communities with female (hoe) and male (plough) farming systems. Even among matrilineal communities, for example, the Khasi in northeast India, women are not part of the village governing body or even assembly, the *dorbar*, which is an all-male body. One would expect that with growing links with external societies, as between gatherer-hunter and agriculturists, there would be a growing importance of the political sphere, from which women have been excluded. Attempts by women to enter the political sphere, at the level of the local community or village, have resulted in denunciation as witches, as in the case of Mariam in Chhattisgarh.

Santhal and Munda women are even forbidden from knowing the house spirits. The Santhal have different sets of village rituals for the village collective and for the family. There is complete exclusion of women from participation

in worship of family spirits. Just as their role in family worship, their role in village collective worship is also very limited. The family spirits (*abe bonga*s and *orak bonga*) of the clan and the family are passed on from father to son. They are not known to women and those outside the clan, lest this knowledge be used to bring harm to the family. Men alone can relate to the family spirits through prayer and through partaking of the sacrificial animal. Women cannot know the family spirits or participate in their worship. Married sisters and daughters are not allowed into the internal shrine (*bhitri*). It is usually cleaned by girls in pre-puberty and unmarried state of life. But no woman is allowed to participate in the rites. They cannot sacrifice animals or witness the sacrifice (Archer 1984: 129). They can assist in certain ceremonies and can only share certain portions of the sacrificed meat, that is, other than the head, which is the most prized part of the meat.

Women are excluded from most of the village collective rituals. They cannot enter the sacred grove (*jaher* or *sarna*). They do not participate in the main festival of the agricultural harvest (*lohrae*). It is interesting that in the gathering-related spring or flower festival, they perform the main dance. Nevertheless, they cannot enter the sacred grove, and even the worship of the female spirits of the sacred grove (*jaher-era* and *gosaen-era*), along with the male spirit, is performed by the male village priest, assisted by young men chosen through spirit possession.

Women are not supposed to show familiarity with the *bonga*s (spirits): 'A female who professes intimate familiarity with the bongas is looked upon as a witch and persecuted' (Archer 1979: 294). Thus, women are not full members of the clan or family. On marriage they leave the father's clan but never become full members of the husband's clan. This creates a class of persons with lesser political rights.

In these agricultural communities, men performed the rites, for instance, before land preparation and sowing, or even before harvesting. Women had a role in the preparation of materials for the rituals but not in performing the rituals themselves. Women were forbidden to know the rituals and chanting of prayers. In Chhattisgarh and Odisha, wives of priests are scared to even be around when their priest-husbands are chanting prayers, lest they be denounced as trying to learn the prayers in order to become witches, *toni*. Among the Warli of western India, 'education for *bhagat*-hood [priesthood] is forbidden to women because they become witches and misuse the knowledge' (Dalmia 1988: 46). Where women are caught trying to surreptitiously acquire this knowledge, they can be denounced as *bhutali*s or witches.

Women, in these societies, are not permitted to participate in the main religious rites and rituals. But do women, or some women, undertake religious practices that are then labelled witchcraft? There is a widespread

belief that this is so among the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand. No woman actually admits to carrying out any traditional or Sarna Dharma-–related religious practices. To do so would invite denunciation as a witch, since in the traditional religious system women are not allowed to participate in religious rites. They can prepare the materials for the rites but are not permitted as participants in the rites.

But the early missionaries were convinced that there was in fact some form of secret worship by women. Accounts of witches point out that they chant and dance, starting from the prohibited shrine of the village ancestors (*manji-than*) and going to the prohibited sacred grove: 'I am inclined to think that the practice of witchcraft by Santhal women is, to a certain extent, really secret worship, resorted to by women because they are not permitted to take part with the men directly and personally in ordinary public worship' (Bodding 1925: 224). Some contemporary anthropologists and observers of *adivasi* life have also privately mentioned that they have observed some such secret rites by women in sacred groves, which they are otherwise forbidden to enter. K. S. Singh is reported to have observed such secret midnight ritual practices of some indigenous women sometime in the last quarter of the twentieth century (Bosu-Mullick 2015), something he had also mentioned to the authors.

There, however, are some religious practices carried out by women. The solidified sap of the *sakhua* tree is burnt as incense. This is done by all women on the occasion of festivals, such as *sarhul* (indigenous spring festival). A woman who burns such incense on other occasions, be it only for the house to be fragrant, is in danger of being condemned as a witch.

But women's religious practices are also much more mundane, but even those of the everyday variety are, nevertheless, liable to be condemned. Women in all these indigenous societies (Ho, Munda, Oraon, and Santhal) are not allowed to conduct prayer (*puja*) inside the house. The house is the place where the clan spirit (*bonga*) resides, and its identity is to be known only to the man. This patrilineal clan spirit is passed on from father to son—in a way analogous to that of the matrilineal clan spirit in northeast Thailand, the Isan region, where the matrilineal spirit is passed on from mother to daughter (Nathan, Kelkar, and Yu 1998). It is forbidden for women to even know the name of the household spirit. Any religious observance carried out individually and not as part of a festival is liable to be labelled an attempt to gain superior powers or harmful powers by propitiating the spirits.

In the preceding pages, we have given some contemporary examples of women's ritual practices leading to denunciation as witches. Radha Munda, for example, had good agricultural land and got bumper crops. This made people in the village jealous. They alleged that she had got all support from

the family spirits to shift her house. This they held had made her powerful, for which they denounced her as a witch.

The point is that any and all of the religious practices of women can be labelled an attempt to propitiate the spirits and gain powers to harm others. A well-supported woman, with a husband and sons, is not likely to be condemned for such practices. But a woman without such support of a husband is considered weak and likely to be condemned for any such religious practices.

Here, it should be pointed out that women's religious practices are of a propitiatory nature, that is, of making offerings to seek favour from the spirits. Men's religious practices in these communities, on the contrary, are basically those of sacrifice. Women often prepare materials for sacrifice but do not perform the sacrifice. The difference between propitiatory rites as women's religious practices and sacrifice as men's religious practices has been discussed in the literature on the anthropology of religion. Over time, women's practices that were at the centre stage get relegated to the margins, and possession, which was formerly a sign of being blessed, then becomes a sign of malevolent powers (Nathan, Kelkar, and Yu 1998).

It is likely that these differences go back to different productive roles of women and men. The former are mainly gatherers, although women have had some role even in hunting (see Singh 2001; Kelkar, Nathan, and Walter 2003). Gathering links with practices of giving some of the gathered foods as an offering. The first fruits, for instance, are given as offering, and only after that can fruits be eaten. Men are mainly hunters, which would easily link with sacrificial practices, with a portion of the hunted animals being given up, a practice that could be transformed into sacrificing domesticated animals, such as chicken.

Thus, that there is some worship by indigenous women, kept secret because it is prohibited, is very likely. But the question is, why does such worship become a manifestation of an evil force? This is related to a belief in the existence of evil forces within the society.

Punishing women for their initiative or assertion of voice

In our case studies, there are a number of women who were attacked for taking the initiative. While women are expected to work hard for the well-being of the marital family, they are also expected to remain subordinate. Since marriage is patrilocal, women leave their natal village. They lose the social networks that they had and go to a village where they do not have a social network independent of their husbands and their families. Within this

village, if they assert their independence in one way or the other, they can be branded as witches.

We came across only one case in Rajasthan (Hari Bai of Bhelbada) where a woman has asserted her independence in keeping her land and succeeded in fighting against witch persecution. In other cases (13 out of 110 cases), women recounted being persecuted for being independent or assertive. Such branding, even the threat of branding as a witch, can inhibit women from asserting any independent position. The growth of the market economy in fact provides women opportunities for new economic activities, activities that they could carry out without relying on their husbands' land. The opportunities could be from the collection and sale of non-timber forest products or the performance of wage labour in, say, construction.

The reservation of seats in local government also provides women with opportunities for political expression. This is something that is not allowed to them in traditional village assemblies, which women are not allowed to attend.

Mariam, however, became an elected member of the *panchayat* (village government) in Chhattisgarh, India. She had been firm in her activities as a local government member, refusing to allow falsification of employment guarantee (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act [MGNREGA]) work. Her assertion of an independent position led to her being branded and hounded as a witch. Jhalo of Chhattisgarh began working with micro-finance groups, called self-help groups in India. This resulted in her interacting with many officials. She became more self-confident and dressed better and even persuaded her husband to stop drinking alcohol. All this invited the envy of her brother-in-law, who denounced her as a witch.

Women's assertion of their independence could also be in the shape of their 'excessive' participation in prayer and worship rituals. As mentioned earlier, women are not supposed to know the identity of the patri-clan spirits. Carrying out various rituals can be interpreted as an 'uncommon religious practice', something aimed at acquiring evil powers to do harm, even while benefiting her own family.

Indigenous women's resistance and witch hunts

We have discussed witch persecutions and what they say about the creation of patriarchy among indigenous peoples and peasants in central India. That, however, should not be taken to mean that the creation of patriarchy is a completed process among these indigenous peoples. The case studies show that indigenous women have continued to exercise their agency in trying to control and use income from their and their families' labour, and in trying

to retain their land. They have also attempted to do well in utilizing their income to improve the condition and well-being of their children and families. They have taken the initiative to seek local leadership positions. All of these actions, indications of their agency, have led to witch accusations and persecution, even death. Had these women meekly accepted the dictates of patriarchy, there would not have been such witch hunts. It is when the creation of patriarchy is ongoing and not complete that such witch hunts have taken place.

If and when the creation of patriarchy is completed, it is likely that such incidents would die down. In such a situation witch accusations may die down, while new forms of resistance are likely to emerge. This ties up with an analysis of witch accusations in Sierre Leone (van de Grijspaarde et al. 2012), which shows that their incidence is higher where there is a conflict between the old communitarian and the new market-based ethic and less where the market-based ethic holds full sway. One can well expect that in a situation where patriarchy has been fully established, there would be a reduction in witch hunts—and the rise of new forms of women's agency and resistance, which may or may not result in witch accusations.

The analysis of the connection of witch hunts with the creation of patriarchy among the indigenous peoples in central India is carried forward in the next chapter, where we utilize an overall analytical framework for understanding the creation of patriarchy.

Creating Patriarchy 6

In this chapter we take up the role of witch hunts in indigenous, pre-state, and early state societies in the creation of patriarchy. There are different trajectories in the creation of patriarchy. In one there is an exclusion of women from the higher, ritual sphere of knowledge; this exclusion is sustained through persecuting women as witches for any attempt to break the taboo. In another trajectory the very knowledge that women possessed of the ritual sphere is itself transformed from having been beneficial to society to being the source of evil.

Approaches

In the manner of institutional economics, patriarchy is an institution through which resource rights and control are allocated among the genders within a household. Furthermore, gender struggles are social processes of bargaining over institutions (Folbre 2006). Witch hunts then can be identified as an extreme form of gender struggle through which, in some indigenous societies, men established their domination over the various sites of the society, polity, and economy.

The creation of patriarchy was the outcome of a long historical process. In Europe, according to Gerda Lerner (1986), it took about 2,500 years for patriarchy to be established. There are two major analyses of the type of women's labour that was controlled in this process. Lerner, following Claude Meillassoux and Peter Aaby, identifies women's reproductive labour as being the first labour to be appropriated: 'Thus, the first appropriation of private property consists of the appropriation of women as *reproducers*' (1986: 52, emphasis in original) and 'the product of the commodification of

women—bride-price, sale price and children—was appropriated by men. It may very well represent the first accumulation of private property' (1986: 213).

Lerner's analysis follows that of Friedrich Engels (1972) who understood women as 'producers of life' and men as virtually producers of everything else. He thought that men both hunted and gathered in hunter-gatherer or forager societies. Women largely foraged the plant foods that were the dominant sources of subsistence in tropical climates (Lee and Daly 1999b: 8). Not only did women gather and only, in a limited way, participate in hunting, as attested by cave paintings (for example, the Neolithic site at Burzahom in Kashmir which shows a woman and a man together hunting a big animal with a spear, as also accounts of the Greek epics and India's *Arthashastra*), with images of women as hunters and soldiers (Singh 2001).

In another analysis, Stephanie Coontz and Peta Hernderson (1986) find the origins of gender stratification in 'women's role in production, and not in her powers of reproduction' (1986: 35). In the discussion in India, Gail Omvedt (1987) also took the position of linking patriarchy with the control of women's labour as a whole and not just in reproduction.

Besides the type of women's labour that was subordinated, there is the question of when and how this subordination took place. Did it emerge full blown with the formation of the state, or did it predate the state? Maurice Godelier argues on the basis of his analysis of the pre-colonial Baruya of Papua New Guinea, 'The subordination, oppression, even exploitation of women are social facts, whose origins lie not in the emergence of classes but predate them and are different in nature' (1982: x). In a review of Lerner's *Creation of Patriarchy* (1986), Omvedt held that 'empirical evidence is lacking for any significant subordination of women before the rise of the first states' (1987: 197). We, however, show that witch hunts in some indigenous societies in non-state or proto-state formations of early agriculturist societies were one of the gender struggles for control over knowledge and resources by which women's subordination was established. This shows a significant subordination of women in non-state or proto-state societies.

In our analysis, we place an emphasis on the male monopolization of higher forms of knowledge, such as those of ritual and communication with 'spirits' as the key factor in the creation of patriarchy, which occurs when men take control of first the higher forms of knowledge, then also other social spheres, such as the economy, property, and political affairs. In order, however, to analyse the process of the creation of patriarchy, it will be useful to define patriarchy in terms of its components or aspects. Patriarchy is not one-dimensional; it is multi-dimensional or a vector of inequalities between women and men.

Dimensions of patriarchy

Patriarchy can be defined as a 'system of social structure, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women' (Walby 1989). Walby delineates six dimensions or sites of patriarchy, which we slightly modify: household work, paid (or so-called economic) work, sexuality, the state (or politics), culture, and violence. The spheres of culture, production, reproduction, sexuality, politics, ritual, and knowledge are the spheres within which gender relations operate in a community. When these spheres of existence are all or mainly dominated by men, we can call it patriarchy.

Walby includes violence as a constitute sphere of patriarchy. Violence, however, can be seen as both constitutive of patriarchy, for example, by giving men a monopoly of violence, and as instrumental. It can be instrumental in setting up patriarchy. Since we are looking at the role of witch hunts in the creation of patriarchy, we are concerned with the instrumental role of this violence. Witch hunts and the whole witch complex of accusations and persecutions are a form of gender struggle through which patriarchal control or domination of various spheres of social existence was established.

Household work can be understood to be all that produces, nurtures, and maintains labour power. This includes both domestic work and that of reproduction, including child care. Domestic work reproduces labour and the society on a daily or short-term basis. The work of bearing and caring for children is part of reproduction on a generational basis. The two together can be categorized as reproductive work.

Walby's dimension of paid work is a market-based category. It, however, can be generalized to what is called economic or productive work, whether in gathering, hunting, agriculture, or modern industry and services. Some of it may be paid work, in the sense of bringing a cash income. But in indigenous societies, much of it produces goods to be consumed within the household or community. The production of goods and services that constitute the material basis of a community can be termed productive work.

Patriarchy is created through a nexus of ideas, customs, and social behaviour of women and men, called culture. At a critical level, the idea of women as the origin of evil or as possessing supernatural powers to harm others is a key critical construct in the construction of patriarchy. It can also include relatively day-to-day matters such as the way in which women keep their hair. At a discussion with a police officer in central India, Govind was told that an indigenous woman keeping her hair short and unkempt, as she did, would be taken as the mark of a witch.

Together, reproductive and productive work include all of women's and overall social labour, but it is useful to separate these two dimensions of

women's labour, as separate dynamics could exist for these two dimensions. Engels identified men's control of work in production in the form of property as the critical factor in the creation of patriarchy (1884, 1972). Lerner, on the contrary, argued that men's control over women's reproductive labour, the creation and rearing of children, predated men's control over household production (1986). We take men's control over both productive and reproductive labour as constitutive of patriarchy.

Sexuality, in particular monogamous heterosexuality for women, has been seen to be important in relation to private property and inheritance. The control of women's sexuality is a form of *sexual contract* (Pateman 1988), with asymmetric rights and responsibilities between women and men. While women have more, even sole, responsibility for rearing children and other dependents, men enjoy greater sexual freedom. This control of women's sexuality is related to both the control of women's reproductive powers and inheritance systems.

Patriarchy exists at both micro/household and macro/societal levels. In both Engels' and Lerner's work, men control the state. More broadly, this can be identified as the political sphere, since there are also pre-state political spheres, existing in both the proto-states of agriculturist societies, and even the external political relations of gatherer-hunter bands or female farming systems.

What could be included as part of culture but can also be separately identified is that of ritual or religion. Just as we take politics to include that of the extra-household relations of non- and proto-state societies, the sphere of religion too can be extended to include rituals, such as sacrifices performed at the inception of ploughing, household and other rituals to ancestral spirits, and so on. Exclusion from these rituals can be taken as an area in which gender hierarchies can be formed, culminating in patriarchy.

Knowledge and rituals

Knowledge exists and is developed in all spheres of social existence. Two factors differentiate types of knowledge. First is the prevailing social valuation of different types of knowledge, for example, that in production and ritual, where the latter may be ranked higher than the former, in which case there would be a hierarchy that those who possess ritual knowledge have a socially higher status, while those who possess only the first type of knowledge are in a socially lower status. In addition, there could be the valuation of knowledge on the basis of the ease or difficulty with which it is acquired.

From the above, we can identity a trajectory in the gender struggles resulting in the creation of patriarchy in indigenous peoples of central India.

Through the witch complex, men secure control of the ritual sphere and exclude women from the same. Men's knowledge of the ritual sphere is valorized, and women are excluded from it, while women's attempts to gain the same knowledge is stigmatized as witchcraft. Men also have control of the households' and communities' external relations, through their monopoly of village councils and the positions of village head and village priest. These ritual and external spheres dominate that of mundane production. With plough agriculture, women are excluded from crucial ploughing tasks by taboo. The labour of in-marrying women is accumulated in the patrilineage. Witch accusations and their threats are instruments to force women to comply with this accumulation of their labour in the patrilineage. In addition, witch persecutions serve to ensure that land does not go out of the patrilineage, illustrated by the large proportion of widows among the accused. These social meanings of witch hunts, and not just their ideological constructs, are necessary for an understanding of the widespread phenomenon of witch hunts among indigenous peoples.

In arguing for the instrumentalization of witch hunts to seize the land of widows, we note that accusations are often brought by the immediate male relatives of husbands. The husband's brother or cousins are often the ones who bring these charges. Even if the accusers are not the persons who directly secure the widows' lands, since these accusations occur within kinship relations, the widows' lands would remain within the patrilineage.

In contrast, among the gatherer-hunter societies, healing and the performance of rituals may be highly specialized and gender-specific or open to whoever wants to learn the skills (Endicott 1999: 413). In addition, 'rather than assigning all authority in economic, political, or religious matters to one gender or the other, hunter-gatherers tend to leave decision-making about men's work and areas of expertise to men, and about women's work and expertise to women, either as groups or as individuals' (Endicott 1999: 415). The author also points out, 'There are few systematic accounts of gender symbolism in specific foraging societies, but even partial accounts suggest that foragers' ideas about gender lack the kind of overt sexual antagonisms found in the ideologies of many South American and New Guinea horticultural societies' (Endicott 1999: 416). We might add the kind of gender, rather than sexual, antagonism, found among early agriculturist indigenous societies. However, there are accounts of witch beliefs among foragers in Australia (Hutton 2017).

Gatherer-hunter societies, which secure immediate returns on their labour, do not seem to rely as much on rituals as do early agriculturist indigenous societies, which are in James Woodburn's (1982) conceptualization delayed return economies. Since there are many things that can go wrong (insufficient

or too much rain, wild animal attacks, and so on) over the agricultural season, there could be a critical role for rituals in ensuring that labour is rewarded.

Myths about women's power

What do witch origin myths say of the nature of society before men began to take it over? This is not so clear, though the enormous and bold work of Marija Gimbutas, summarized in *The Civilization of the Goddess* (1990, 1997), makes the point that there existed some other order, a woman-centred or gynocentric order, in European society before Bronze Age patriarchy.

In the Santhal myth in central India, there is an idea that women had some power which the men took away from them with help from the supreme deity, Maran Buru. The Santhal myth of the origin of witches is instructive in this regard, not as history but as a way of showing ongoing struggles in society:

> One day the village men assembled, 'We are men', they said, 'why are we disobeyed? If we say a word or two to women, they reply with twenty words of anger. We can bear this state no longer'. Then they said, 'Let us go to Maran Buru and learn an art so that these women will respect us more'. At midnight they met in the forest and called to Maran Buru. 'Grandfather', they said, 'many men are so harassed that they have come to see you'. Maran Buru came to them. 'What is troubling you, grandchildren', he asked. They told of their trouble and implored him to teach them how to keep their womenfolk in order.

As the myth goes, the women came to know that the men had approached Maran Buru to teach them something. The women got the men drunk, dressed in men's clothes, and tricked Maran Buru into teaching them. 'Maran Buru taught them the incantations and gave them the power of eating men.' The next day, when the men came, Maran Buru realized that he had been tricked by the women. He then made the men 'expert in the art of witch-finding' (Archer 1974: 292–3).

The idea that women stole the power that men had is sometimes inverted in other communities. There it is the men who stole the power that women had and then carefully guarded it from women. This is frequently seen in other myths as well. An account of Amazonian myths points out,

> Each myth begins with a prior and chaotic era before the present social order was established, when women were supposed to have ruled over the land. It was said that the women originally created the sacred lodges, trumpets and masks. They sat in the seat of power, ruling without justice or mercy. Then the situation is suddenly reversed. (Bamberger 1974: 276)

What is important in all these myths is that there is a change in the order of society, a change that establishes the authority of men. This is a gender conflict, a conflict over power and the roles of women and men in these societies.

Ownership and labour

The prohibition of women from the sphere of ritual and spiritual knowledge and the denunciation of those women who show familiarity with the spirits as witches were crucial in the creation of a gender hierarchy. This hierarchy existed in the context of indigenous societies carrying out both hoe agriculture in the uplands and plough cultivation in small, low-lying river valleys. The former is what Ester Boserup termed a female farming system and the latter, a male farming system (Boserup 1970).

In hoe agriculture, forest land was cleared for cultivation in a slash-and-burn manner of swidden cultivation. Other than this task of clearing the forest for cultivation, the rest of the agricultural tasks were basically undertaken by women. From sowing of seeds right until harvesting, all tasks were carried out by women, which is the basis for Boserup calling it a female farming system. As she pointed out, such a female farming system used to prevail in much of sub-Saharan Africa. Such hoe agriculture has also existed among the indigenous peoples of central India, as also in northeast India in upland cultivation. There may be some participation by men in some of the post-slash-and-burn activities, but women perform the bulk of these tasks.

The Austro-Asiatic (and other) communities of central India combined hoe agriculture in the upland with wet rice cultivation through plough agriculture in the narrow valleys that dotted the region. In this male farming system, men carried out the critical ploughing of the land. This was prized as the critical agricultural task, and women were tabooed from participating in it, with the taboo extending to even touching the plough. Such a taboo exists among these Austro-Asiatic communities in central India. Some of these people were more swidden cultivators than others. Edward Dalton had remarked in the mid-nineteenth century, 'In marked contrast to the Kolarians of the Munda and Ho divisions, the Santhals, as a rule care little for permanently locating themselves' (1872: 208).

That the Mundas at one time practised swidden cultivation is shown in their spring festival. One component of it mimics setting fire to trees, cutting down burning trees, and using the ashes for a magical purpose. This, as Yamada Ryuji points out, is a symbolic representation of slash-and-burn agriculture (1970). The Gonds of Andhra Pradesh, a Dravidian-speaking people, who no longer practise swidden elaborately enact swidden agriculture in their spring festival. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf points out, 'The Gonds

have no explanation for the discrepancy between the scene enacted and their real method of cultivation, but it is quite usual for religious or magical rites, handed down with little change from one generation to another, to reflect custom of past ages' (1979: 445).

With hoe or swidden agriculture, fields are cultivated for a few years and then, when productivity declines, left as fallows to regenerate. As fallows, the land is no longer private but goes back to the community. In such a system, there is little accumulation on land and there is little meaning in owning or inheriting land. In fact, among the Santhal, the swidden lands were redistributed annually on the occasion of the annual hunt. The heads of households ritually give back their land and then get it back. Redistribution has ceased, but Dalton pointed to an earlier practice involving redistribution. The *parmanik*, the village official who sees to farming arrangements, '... disallows any monopoly of peculiarly fertile rice lands; all must take their share of good and bad' (Dalton 1872: 213). When the community settles down, there could be a return to plots that had been earlier settled by a family, and the redistribution could just become notional.

The exclusion of women from ritual and some production spheres is combined with a change in the inheritance system with plough agriculture. In this system of agriculture, there is an investment of labour in improving the land. The land is not only cleared of forest but also levelled, and channels are built for distributing water drawn from the streams. In addition, organic matter, from cow dung or burnt leaves and wood, is accumulated in the land. All of this increases the productivity of wet rice or plough cultivation, making it valuable as individual or family possession, within an overall system of community ownership.

Individuals then relate to land in two ways—both as members of the community, which is the proprietor of the land, and as workers, who can use the produce from their labour on the land. Without belonging to the community (not just in general but in a particular lineage), the individual cannot acquire land in the villages, but without labour the individual cannot acquire the right to retain the land. Ownership and labour are combined.

Ownership and labour, however, are not combined for all those who form part of the community. Women relate to this communal property only as workers and not as owners: 'In the most ancient ... communities, equality of rights could only apply to members of the community; women, slaves and foreigners were excluded from this equality as a matter of course' (Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, quoted in Meillassoux 1981: 145).

This is different from men in matrilineal systems, such as that of the Khasi. There, men have an important position as managers of the land, whether it

is as the mother's brother or the owning daughter's husband. Furthermore, in some matrilineal systems (in the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya and the Mosuo of Yunnan, China), men continue to work on the lands of their mothers' lineage, and the results of their labour go not to their wives' but their own lineage. This relation has existed along with the 'visiting husband' system of marriage, now famous from the Mosuo example advertised for tourism as 'the land where women rule'!

Hoe, plough, cattle, and witches: An African trajectory

Plough agriculture necessarily involves the use of large animals, cattle, horses, or camels for traction. The domestication and productive use of large animals seem to have been in men's domain. Consequently, with the growth of plough agriculture, there is also the increase in men's importance in production. We have mentioned earlier the importance of labour invested in land improvement and the consequent push for making land heritable. Simultaneously, there is also the rearing of cattle as part of the domestic agrarian economy. This introduction of the cattle has been associated with a shift from matriliny to patriliny.

An early study of matrilineal societies in Africa found that matriliny was positively associated with hoe agriculture or horticulture. On the contrary, introduction of cattle, whether as part of agriculture, as an agro-pastoralist system, or as a fully pastoralist system, was associated with patriliny. As the author picturesquely puts it, 'The cow is the enemy of matriliny, and the friend of patriliny' (Aberle 1961: 680). However, as Clare Janaki Holden and Ruth Mace point out, there is a statistical problem of collinearity in David Aberle's analysis, known in anthropology as Galton's problem (2003). The problem is that human cultures are not statistically independent as they are historically related. They solved this problem with a more sophisticated statistical analysis using phylogenetic methods of cross-cultural comparison.

From George Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas* (1967) and linguistic sources, they combined ethnographic and language data on 68 Bantu- and Bantoid-speaking peoples across Africa. Of these, 24 (35 per cent) are matrilineal and 37 (54 per cent) are patrilineal, with cattle in 30 peoples (44 per cent). Matrilineal descent is found mainly in the central African 'matrilineal belt', while there is a tendency for cattle to be clustered in east and southern Africa. Their results supported the hypothesis that acquiring cattle led to the loss of matriliny in Bantu-speaking cultures. The acquisition of cattle would be

important in the case of both agro-pastoral systems of plough agriculture and pastoral systems alone.

There is historical linguistic evidence that Bantu-speaking societies have had bilateral kinship and social organizations, that is, descent was counted on both female and male kinship lineages. Christopher Ehret, however, argues that for some Bantu languages, the favoured term for lineage was 'house', which has a female connotation since the house is identified as the woman's, which is the characteristic feature of a wife and mother. He concludes, '... it seems probable that by the proto-Savanna-Bantu period, society was structured around matriclans ..., each composed of matrilineages' (Ehret 2001: 154).

Holden and Mace point out that initially Bantu-speaking peoples did not have cattle, which we interpret to mean that they carried on hoe agriculture. With the adoption of cattle (that is, plough-based agriculture or pastoralism), patriliny developed in eastern and southern Africa. Patriliny did develop in central Africa, but that, they say, must be due to other reasons. The reasons could be the growth of trade and commercial production or even warfare. Their conclusion is that Bantu-speaking peoples were matrilineal before they acquired cattle and then became patrilineal (Holden and Mace 2003: 2429).

Following the above, our question is, did the transition from matriliny or bilateral to patrilineal kinship and social organization come about through a relatively benign process or was there a struggle involved, a struggle that could involve the denunciation of the matrilineage and women as witches or demons? Did the witch persecution–centred transition analysed earlier for central India also occur in Africa?

The early Bantu societies had a conception of evil as not arising from 'divine judgement', as in the Sudanic religions, but close to home. It was not only the neglect of ancestors that created evil but also 'individual jealousy or ill-will'. This was in the form of *bu-logi*, which Ehret translates as witchcraft (Ehret 1998: 159–60). Where there is witchcraft, as among the early Bantu, there must also be witch finders. Ehret says there were 'witch-doctors' whose task was diagnosing the causes of sickness and misfortune, and 'prescribing a course of treatment directed towards rooting out the *bu-logi*', that is, witchcraft. Ehret uses the term 'witch-doctor', but it would be what we prefer to call 'witch-finder' whose job was to root out witchcraft. As John Mbiti pointed out, medicine men are those who indicate and 'purge witches' (Mbiti 1970: 221, 223). Is there, therefore, a somewhat ancient origin of witch persecutions among Bantu-speaking peoples in Africa? This is a question to be further researched. Of course, ancient origins do not imply that the meanings of witchcraft beliefs or the societies in which they operated remained the same.

Transformations of both beliefs and practices would definitely occur over the millennia from the early Bantu period in tropical Africa as societies moved from hoe to plough agriculture and then also cattle rearing and market-based production. In further support of this possibility, we give a few examples of witch struggles among some matrilineal peoples in Asia and Africa.

Men opposed to matrilineal equality

Among the matrilineal Khasi in northeast India, there is not a similar trajectory of agriculture and patrilineality, nor of hierarchy in knowledge (Mukhim 2019). The Khasi do not have a visiting husband system, but children and land belong to the matriclan. The Khasi have a concept of feeding human blood to the serpent (*khlem*) to become better off. But the persons who do feed human blood to the serpent are men. Without explicitly stating this, the colonial official P. R. T. Gurdon everywhere uses the masculine pronoun to refer to those who feed the *khlem* with human, specifically Khasi, blood (Gurdon 1990). Overall, however, in the matrilineal Khasi, men play an important role as managers of the land. Men, specifically the maternal uncle, being the feeders of the serpent, however, does show that there has been some sort of gender struggle going on within the Khasi. Furthermore, opposition to this enrichment was expressed in the need for anyone from the *khlem*-feeding family to give up all his or her possessions in order to qualify for marriage. A recent study of persecutions of those who feed the serpent found that 10 out of 11 were men. Among four women who were also attacked, three were related to the men in the cases. Only one woman was attacked on her own (Lyngdoh 2015). This points to the role of men who accumulated and disrupted equality.

Mosuo and Naxi in Yunnan, China

Among the Mosuo in Yunnan, China, with the visiting husband system, both women and men worked with their own mothers. Their labour accumulated in the matriclan. Nevertheless, among the Mosuo and the closely related Naxi of Yunnan, there is an idea of women who carry the evil spirit and can do harm to others. One of our co-researchers, the late Naxi scholar Xi Yihua, when asked about this remembered that as children they were warned not to loiter near the house of a woman, who could infect them, particularly if one had an open wound. Among the Naxi, the keepers of evil spirits that could cause harm were known as *chao pu xi* (Kelkar, Nathan, and Walter 2003).

There was a similar notion among the Mosuo of women who harboured the *gu* or *du* evil spirit (Kelkar, Nathan, and Walter 2003).

The imposition of the Confucian system of ethics (the three obediences of a woman to her father before marriage, her husband in marriage, and her son as a widow), four virtues (morality, proper speech, modest manner, and diligent work), and arranged marriage as against the former practice of marriage for love was accompanied by a large number of 'suicide for love' as noticed by J. F. Rock (1947) and Peter Goullart (1950). But as Yang Fuqian pointed out, 'In Lijiang every village had some families that were called the keepers of ghosts (*chao pu xi*) ... among the youth who committed suicide for love, most were the next generation of such families' (Yang 1993).

As pointed out earlier, the keepers of ghosts and who used them to cause harm to others were women. There was a connection between suicide for love and the Naxi belief that those who were keepers of ghosts or demons were women (Yang 2003). These powers to cause harm were passed on from mother to daughter. If a woman did not have a daughter, it would be passed on to the daughter-in-law.

If a person fell ill and it was not possible to treat the illness, or if there was some other misfortune in the family, then it was believed to have been caused by a woman who was a *chao pu xi*. Rumours about that woman were spread in the village. The *dongba*, male priest of the Naxi, played a key role in identifying whether the woman was *chao pu xi*. The result was often that the woman committed suicide.

However, the idea that 'women are lowly, men are noble' (Gan 1996) is said to be part of the pre-Confucian Naxi thought. There are ritually inferior practices for women in Naxi society. Women are not allowed to approach the altar to worship heaven. The saying 'One-hundred year old man is a Buddha; one-hundred year old woman is a demon [or witch]' reflects a belief, found in other indigenous societies, that old women are witches. Of course, the period before the imposition of Han rule does not mean that these indigenous peoples were not in contact with the Han. A linguistic analysis might reveal the indigenous or other origins of the relevant words.

A recent study (Mace et al. 2018) of 800 Mosuo households in Sichuan found that 13.7 per cent of them were said to carry the evil spirit, called *gu* among the Mosuo. Households that were not said to carry the evil spirit did not marry with *gu* households, who inter-married, worked, and otherwise cooperated with each other. The *gu* households were, on average, somewhat better off than non-*gu* households. Some of them were thought to have acquired precious metals from other indigenous peoples. So, here too there is a stigmatization of households that were better off or accumulating.

Dai in Yunnan, China

A stigmatization of households that did better than others is also found among the Dai (a Tai language–speaking lowland people) in southern Yunnan, China. They have similar production methods, social structure, and belief systems to other Tai speakers outside central Thailand, like the Tai Yaun of northern Thailand or the Shan of Myanmar. Dai women are said to carry the *pippa* or tiger spirit, with which they were accused of causing harm to others. The oldest Chinese record of the *pippa* is in the *Record of Customs of South-west Barbarians* in 1572 during the Ming Dynasty: 'witchcraft: there are "*phusi*" ghosts, *practised only by women*' (emphasis added). In typical witch fashion, 'they change their shape into that of cats or dogs, sneak into other people's houses, lick the sick person's hands and feet, smell the nose and mouth, and then absorb that person's flesh' (quoted in Liang 1983: 346–7). Again, there surely was contact with other cultures, but we cannot doubt the ancient nature of these witch beliefs. The *pippa* or tiger spirit belief of the Dai in Yunnan seems similar to that of the *phi ka* of the Lanna Kingdom of northern Thailand and the *phii paub* of Isan or northeastern Thailand. In the Lanna Kingdom, there were reports of hundreds of people being accused as harbourers of *phi ka* and being driven out in the 1870s and 1880s (Ganjanapan 1984: 325). Stanley Tambiah reports that in the Isan village he studied, there were some cases of *phi paub* accusations (Tambiah 1970).

In the period before the formation of the People's Republic of China (1950), there were a large number of persons, mainly women, who were declared *pippa* and, along with their families, driven out of their villages, with all the villagers participating in this affair. There were some instances of men being denounced as *pippa.* For instance, the uncle of the Naxi writer Xi Na was driven out of his village. The founder of the *pippa* village of Man Jing Dai was a man, we were told, who farmed with a 'silver plough'. There were other men too who were said to have found 'silver boxes'. What the silver plough or box refers to is men who were somewhat better off, either because the family had better land or were better organized in farming the land. Thus, the men who were targets as *pippa* were those who were better off. Anan Ganjanapan (1984) reports the same for northern Thailand. In fact, there being better off fuelled the resentment and jealousy of other villagers, who then also engaged in driving the families from the village.

What, however, is the origin of the Dai witch? Andrew Turton points out,

> All descent groups are said to be capable of punishing members for certain wrongs, either interpersonal, e.g. quarreling, illicit sexual relations, splitting up of the group; or ritual shortcomings: failure to sacrifice, or improper sacrifice, disrespectful treatment of sacrifice. Total abandonment

> is said to lead to the transformation of the spirit into *phii ka*, a kind of spirit of witchcraft, also inherited matrilineally, whose owners may be expelled from or refused admission to a village. (1984: 279)

So, the original benevolent spirit is transformed because of certain transgressions, including that of doing better than others, to a malevolent spirit or witch. Our own field work in Yunnan and Anand Ganjanapan's work in northern Thailand showed that being better off was often a factor in declaring someone *phii ka*, or a witch. The economic difference was punished by the transformation of the spirit into an evil spirit, a witch. A similar transformation of old women from being wise to being evil occurs among the Ashanti of Ghana, as is discussed later.

Rungus in Malaysia

Among the Rungus of Sabah, Malaysia, who carry out swidden agriculture and periodically shift village location, the spiritual leaders are women, *bobolizan*. They are supposed to acquire the ability to communicate with the spirits through arduous and lengthy training. However, their villages are not kinship units (Porodong 2001). They do not have a notion of humans as causing evil, although there are evil spirits that need to be propitiated. What was described as sexual symmetry, however, did show signs of change. Men who wished to demonstrate their 'manhood, strength and bravery' (Porodong 2001: 8) would literally hunt a *bobolizan*. The difference with witch hunts was that these women were hunted because they were thought to have extraordinary powers, which could be captured by killing them, not because they were supposed to cause harm, as in the case of witches. Nevertheless, there is a form of gender struggle, where the women spiritual leaders were killed by men aspiring to acquire women's power.

Ashanti in Africa

In Africa, among the Ashanti people of Ghana, there was a complementarity of power between women's superior spiritual power and men's power as rulers and warriors (Akyeampong and Obeng 1995). However, there was also conflict in this relationship. The women deployed spiritual power or witchcraft to challenge the king's political power, and they were defeated. This was followed by the development of the anti-witchcraft cult. This is just one example of a witch phenomenon in conjunction with a conflict between bilateral descent.

Among the Ashanti people, at the level of both lineage and the state, there was a dual power structure. The matrilineage was headed by a male elder and a female elder. They, however, were not quite equal, and the female elder's stool was senior to that of the male, and the oral tradition privileged the role of women (Akyeampong and Obeng 1995). While men waged war, women were the ritual specialists whose rituals were critical to success in war.

In the Ashanti people's history, during the war of 1818–19, the leading women, including the chief's elder sister and some of his wives, rebelled and tried to engineer the defeat of the chief by 'spiritual malfeasance' (McCaskie 1981)—behaving as if the chief were already dead with women chanting the lament for death. The chief, however, returned and crushed the rebellion.

There is subsequent evidence of anti-witchcraft cults in the pre-colonial period (ibid.). Women were the witches and were said to conceal venomous snakes in their genitals. In a later work by Jane Parish, witchcraft is said to be an evil substance found in the vagina of the witch (2000: 427). Importantly, it was not just some women who could become witches; rather, '... all women are potentially witches' (McCaskie 1995: 408). A survivor of one of the anti-witchcraft cults is reported to have said, 'I learned who were the witches and how to catch them' (McCaskie 1981).

It was held that the social order was being subverted by witches, who were women, and it was necessary to eradicate these women. This went along with a confiscation of the wealth of these women, thus linking anti-witchcraft activities with accumulation of wealth. Have we moved beyond Jack Goody's (1976) wealth in people to wealth in things? The Ashanti economy was an unusual combination of a base of hoe agriculture, organized matrilineally in order for labour to be assimilated and imported, including slave labour, in agricultural work gangs, along with a centralized Ashanti state. The state financed itself through production around the capital, Kumasi, which, however, was of the hoe type and imposed taxes on trading. Trading and taxes resulted in the accumulation of wealth. Thus, in the Ashanti economy, there was then a contradiction between 'differentiation implied by wealth, and the egalitarianism implied by descent' (McCaskie 1995: 78).

The contradiction between differentiation and sharing was also a difference between two moral economies, one of individualism and the other of sharing. The matriclans stood for the concept of *papa* or moral goodness, based on concepts of 'sharing, humility and communal wellbeing', while accumulation was based on individualist behaviour: 'They give nothing back ... They do not serve the ancestors' (Parish 2000: 427). There were other anti-witchcraft cults in the colonial period, and this carried on into the contemporary situation with anti-witchcraft shrines being important in protecting ongoing accumulation.

Contradiction of being both wise and malevolent

Among the Akan speakers of the Ashanti people, women, especially older women, were regarded as knowledgeable and wise. In the event of problems that people could not understand, they might say, 'We're going to ask the old lady', as reported by Sjaak van der Geest (2002: 441). But the same wise, old woman could also be denounced as a witch. Just as with the female elders of the Ashanti, were these old women transformed from being wise to being witches, using their wisdom to cause harm? What these historical incidents and the accounts, whether showing actual historical events or not, reflect is the existence of an ongoing gender struggle between men and women for power in various spheres, from ritual to production.

A number of Akan proverbs still continuing in use also point to the possible non-contemporary origin of anti-witchcraft cults. Mensah Adinkrah puts together a number of proverbs and sayings from the Akan language. One can identify a gender struggle, combined with one between old and young in the proverbs. Proverbs can be argued to both define and validate societal norms (Adinkrah 2017: 157). The very Akan words for witch—*obayifoo*, *bayifoo*, or *anyen*—are 'virtually synonymous with elderly women' (ibid.: 177). Again there is a connection with wisdom, as the same old woman is also the one to whom people turn to for answers: 'The *aberewa* (old woman) who is denounced as a witch by relatives at home is the same person whom relatives turn to for answers to questions about their history and traditions' (ibid.: 177).

There is a proverb that points to the possibility of children also being witches: 'Witchcraft (*bayie*) befits the status of an elderly woman (*aberewal*) but a child (*akodaa*) may be the bad one' (ibid.: 160). However, witchcraft is passed on only in the matrilineal line. In addition, a witch can supposedly harm only a close lineage member, particularly a matrilineal relative. The identification of witches as observed in Indian indigenous societies and pointed out by Geschiere (2013) is a matter within kinship, or kinship gone bad in Geschiere's phrase. There, however, is a witch in every matrilineage (Adinkrah 2017: 160).

Witch accusations are related to jealousy of those who are better off and do not give: 'The witch kills the person who eats and does not give me any; the witch does not kill the one who eats but gives me only a little' (ibid.: 163).

As one would expect, while there are characteristics such as being old or rude, witches are said to remain incognito 'until she herself confesses her witchcraft either voluntarily or she has been arrested by some fetish spirit or some other spiritual entity and *forced* to publicly confess that she is a witch' (Bannerman-Richter 1982: 18, emphasis added). In Europe too, 'it was

necessary to use torture to extract a confession' (Larner 2008b: 171) since it was not amenable to the normal principles of proof, or '... the confession, and therefore the torture, the crucial part of the procedure' (Briggs 2013).

Among the Akan, the wise old women are themselves witches, with positive turning into negative. Among other indigenous peoples, the women who could communicate with spirits were the wise women who guided the community. This same ability to communicate with spirits while being in a trance was later redefined not as wisdom but as some form of mental illness. This too is an instance of a positive quality turning negative.

The few examples of witch persecutions and witch hunts among matrilineal peoples show that it is possible to look at the possibility of such gender struggles among other matrilineal and indeed other indigenous peoples. In three of these examples, the Khasi, Dai, and Ashanti societies, there is a further conflict between different moral systems—those of sharing and individualistic accumulation. While in the case of the Dai the accumulation took place within plough agriculture, in the case of the Khasi and the Ashanti it was accumulation through non-agricultural activities, such as trading.

Knowledge and hierarchy

The spiritual and ritual sphere is an important part of social existence. Technical knowledge is, in a sense, mundane and insufficient in itself. Ritual knowledge dominates technical knowledge because ritual is understood to be necessary for labour to be fruitful. Social differentiation, gender differentiation in this case, 'hinges on differential access to social knowledge' (Bender 1989: 92), a differential access enforced through denunciation of women who acquire such knowledge as witches.

In the social systems of hoe agriculture, there is a dual knowledge hierarchy. The technical knowledge of swidden production, in terms of the utilization of micro-environments, micro-sites, multi-crops and multi-varieties, is largely the sphere of women. On the other hand, there is an increased role of rites and rituals in swidden, which are performed by men. What is important is that ritual knowledge requires a specialist who has to spend a lot of time in acquiring the knowledge and skills. As Edmund Leach points out, in the hoe agriculture that he is dealing with, 'outside the field of religious ritual there are few technical tasks that call for a professional specialist' (2004: 135)

An account of ritual knowledge of women *bobolizan* (spiritual leaders) among the Rungus of Sabah shows the effort and time involved in acquiring the required knowledge. The *bobolizan* had a good knowledge of animals, soil, water sources, and forests, including secondary and primary forest. She had to achieve two higher skills. One, expertise in conducting rituals and a great

deal of memorizing to conduct day-long, even week-long rituals, without making a mistake. Two, expertise in the technology of weaving a very intricate pattern. She acquired this knowledge and skills from her mother or a close female relative (Kelkar and Nathan 2003: 38). 'Basically, the *bobolizan's* main function is to maintain law and order in the supernatural world' (Porodong 2001: 71).

Thus, ritual knowledge is more difficult to acquire, requiring rigorous training, while production knowledge is easily acquired through working with the elders. In addition, ritual knowledge is understood to be the condition for the fructification of the latter. This double inequality of knowledge, both in acquisition and valuation, is a basis of social inequality between women and men. This boundary of ritual knowledge, with men on one side as possessors of that knowledge and women on the other side as the excluded gender, is jealously guarded by men through the method of witch persecutions and witch hunts. This inequality in the prestigious knowledge becomes a key feature of gender identity as one of inequality.

Arjun Appadurai characterized luxury goods as 'not so much in contrast to necessities… but as goods whose principal role is rhetorical and social goods that are simply incarnated signs. The necessity to which they respond is fundamentally political' (Appadurai 1986). This is built upon by Simon Harrison who proposes that '… the contrast between luxuries and necessities, between prestige goods and subsistence is essentially the same as the distinction between ritual and technical action … To put it more concisely, ritual is to action, as rhetoric is to discourse, as luxuries are to goods' (Harrison 1992: 237).

We have described earlier the exclusion of women of the Santhal and other Austro-Asiatic communities from the ritual sphere. Exclusion from the ritual sphere deprives women of their authority and when they do participate it is as evil persons seeking magical powers. As Archer notes, a woman who demonstrates close familiarity with the *bonga*s (spirits) is most likely to be denounced as a witch and therefore persecuted (Archer 1974: 294). Her transgression into privileged areas of knowledge is punished. There are similar denunciations of women's trangressions into men's ritual knowledge among the Warli in western India (Munshi 2001) and in Chhattisarh in central India (our fieldwork).

With men's power established in the ritual and political spheres, men's role and knowledge in ploughing is also established and protected through the taboo forbidding women from touching the plough. This taboo established men's principal role in cultivation, principal role not technically but socially. The taboo is, as Marshall Sahlins put it, 'an integral part of the determination of such categories as "chief", "commoner", "men" or "women" … Constituting

the social nature of persons and groups tabu is never a simple reflection upon practice; it is the order of practice, as also the *organization* of it' (Sahlins 1981: 51). The taboo against women ploughing establishes the social nature of women as inferior and socially organizes agriculture, so that men monopolize what is defined as the key task in the system of plough cultivation.

In the state of Jharkhand in India, we noticed that there is a similar taboo against women making or even repairing the roof of a hut. Again, woman not just cannot be complete humans but become inferior to men as they have to depend on men to complete the house. We can remember the wife of a Santhal leftist leader complaining that while her husband was in prison, she had to depend on some other man to repair her roof and keep her house dry from the monsoon rains, but if she were to break the taboo she took the risk of being denounced as a witch.

There are three important features of knowledge through which hierarchy is formed. First is the difficulty of acquiring the knowledge. Second is the ring-fencing of that knowledge, so that its acquisition remains controlled. Third is the social valuation of that knowledge. In the contemporary capitalist world monopoly established through patents, other forms of intellectual property rights' protection, or product differentiation are ways in which knowledge is used to appropriate higher profits or rents and is a key feature of inter-country inequality (Nathan 2019). In indigenous societies too we can see that the monopolization of areas of knowledge through taboos and persecution as witches for breaking the boundaries is a way in which differences in knowledge are turned into hierarchy. Men's control of the sphere of ritual knowledge, control achieved by women being excluded from ritual activities at the risk of being denounced as witches, is a key component of a trajectory in creating patriarchy.

Two trajectories

Among the indigenous peoples in central India, women were excluded from key areas of ritual knowledge. These spheres of ritual, as Harrison points out, constituted the prestige sphere of action. Men's monopolization or ownership of these spheres of knowledge gave them a hierarchical rank superior to that of women. This among these indigenous peoples was the crucial step in the formation of patriarchy.

There, however, was another trajectory in the creation of men's power in spheres of knowledge. Among the Ashanti people, women had their own sphere of ritual knowledge, which was initially superior to that of men and crucial to the functioning of the state. But at some point, this sphere of women's knowledge was turned into its dialectical opposite; from having

been a prized sphere, this sphere of women's knowledge was turned into the basis of witchcraft. This is a trajectory different from the first one. In this trajectory, it is not exclusion, as among indigenous peoples in central India, but the revaluation of the very sphere of women's knowledge that also establishes the hierarchical superiority of men's knowledge.

There have also been other forms of transition from sharing to accumulation, most notably with the herding of large animals, such as the horse and cattle. For Europe, Gimbutas puts forward the hypothesis of the spread of patriarchy as the clash between two cultures, Old European and Indo-European. As she says, 'The process of Indo-Europeanization [what we are referring to as the establishment of patriarchy] was a cultural, not a physical transformation' (Gimbutas 1997: 309). It remains to be seen whether the new culture imposed the exclusion of women from key areas of social knowledge and whether women's own knowledge was devalued as evil.

Then, there is the transition analysed by Godelier (1982), where witches were related not to the internal gender or any other such internal struggle, but to the Baruya's external struggles with other, neighbouring groups. But there too women were excluded from 'the most sacred lore' (ibid.: 142). There is an exclusion of women, but they were not witches, which remained confined to persons from communities with whom they were at war.

The exclusion of women from prestigious areas of knowledge and the devaluation of women's own knowledge as the source of evil are two trajectories in the creation of patriarchy. However, in addition to the establishment of men's monopolization of the prestige sphere of social knowledge, and the denunciation of women's knowledge as that of witches, there could also be other trajectories in the creation of patriarchy. It still remains to identify various such trajectories and see whether gendered differentiation in access to socially valued knowledge is a key factor in all these trajectories of the creation of patriarchy.

Witch Hunting as Women Hunting in Early Modern Europe

7

Widespread witchcraft beliefs are a precondition for the occurrence of witch hunts. But their manifestation in the form of witch hunts occurs in certain social conditions. The explanatory variables that we listed earlier are (*a*) a culture of belief in the existence of persons, women, or men who can cause harm through supernatural powers, (*b*) attempts to define, redefine, or oppose patriarchal norms and roles, and (*c*) overall structural transformation or socio-economic changes of a major kind in which old norms are replaced or sought to be replaced by new norms. These explanatory variables can be used to understand both the predominance of women in early modern Europe as witch accused, 80 per cent of the total, and also the existence of 20 per cent, a significant number, of men as witch accused (Larner 1981).

The belief that women are witches is often attributed to misogyny and a reflection of binary thinking (Rowlands 2013), where the stereotype is that women are evil and cause harm. The binary thinking, however, goes back to the Christian belief of the original man, Adam, as good and the original woman, Eve, who herself is the origin of evil in human society (Noddings 1989). This binary thinking, in turn, creates the stereotype of the witch as woman. The witch acquires supernatural powers, which are used for evil, not from God but from Satan. In addition, Christian theology also portrays women as weak and susceptible to sexual advances and possession by the devil (Clark, in Rowlands 2013).

Christian theology and state action are reinforced by the ordinary belief in 'magic as an inherent quality of human beings, believing that magical powers could be intensified by invoking supernatural spirits of some demonic or divine aspect' (Hagen 2013). But women's independent access to the supernatural was seen theologically in negative terms, a result not of communion with

God but of possession by Satan (Whitney 1995). Together, the combination of theology and ordinary belief produced the witch as a woman.

Was it women hunting?

Despite the general acknowledgement that most persons accused of being witches were women, there has been considerable debate on the connection between women and witches in the context of the witch hunts in early modern Europe. The debate is not about facts, since the figure of 80 per cent of those accused of being women is generally accepted. The debate is about the interpretation of those facts.

Before proceeding with this discussion, we reproduce Carol Karlsen's evocative statement of the limits of statistics in the context of her analysis of the Salem and other New England witch hunts: 'Statistics can establish the extent to which New Englanders considered witchcraft the special province of women, but they cannot convey the vindictiveness that characterized the treatment of female suspects' (Karlsen 1987: 50). The vindictiveness and viciousness of witch hunts can only be understood as deep-seated misogyny being the culture of patriarchy.

Keith Thomas summed up the connection between women and witches as 'they were poor, and they were usually women' (1971: 520)—a formulation that E. William Monter, from his study of France and Switzerland, reversed to usually women and poor except in the case of what he called panic suspects (1976: 118). Thomas, however, held that since the accusations were often from one woman to another, 'the idea that witch-prosecutions reflected a war between the sexes must be discounted' (1971: 568). This, of course, is a *non sequitur*. Feminist analysis points out that many women too could internalize patriarchal values and thus participate in a war against women. Besides, women making such accusations could also do so to portray themselves as different from those women who break hegemonic patriarchal values and to save themselves from potentially being charged for being in league with the proclaimed witches.

A more precise formulation was made by Christina Larner (1981), who held that women were hunted as witches and not as women, and pointed out that some 20 per cent of witches were men. She made the much-quoted formulation that 'the crime of witchcraft, while sex-related was not sex-specific' (2008a: 255). It was largely related to women, but it was not only women who were targeted or hunted. It was not sex-specific in Larner's argument, because all the definitional characteristics of witches are applicable not only to women but also to men. Malice and supernatural power are not the prerogative of one sex or gender alone.

Further, Larner argued that there was no direct relationship between women and witches. By direct relationship is meant that gender was part of the definition of a witch, as being malicious or evil-minded and having supernatural power, that women and witches could be conflated one on the other. The definition of a witch as a person who uses supernatural powers to cause harm or even as a person in a pact with the devil—such definitions do not themselves exclude men from being witches. Such a definitional approach, however, is insufficient, and it is necessary to go to the gender context of these accusations in order to connect being a witch with being a woman. The meaning cannot be separated from the gender or even overall social context of beliefs and accusations.

Larner who made the critical statement 'witch hunting is not woman-hunting' does, however, point out the social context that 'witch hunting is woman-hunting, or at least it is the hunting of women who do not fulfil the male view of how women ought to conduct themselves' (1981: 100). In this statement, Larner moves from just the definition of a witch to looking at the social factors, such as women not meeting the androcentric norms for women. Rather than just the definition of witch, she looks at the social, specifically gender, factors that might make a woman a witch or, in another manner, at the social factors in seeing women as the accused in witch hunts.

Basic in Larner's argument is that since women were not all of the victims, but just 80 per cent of them with men making up the remaining 20 per cent, it was not woman hunting. But if we move away from a mono-casual analysis, we can resolve the tension between the trend (80 per cent women) and the deviation (20 per cent men). If the re-creation of patriarchy is our mono-causal analysis of witch hunts, then we will not be able to explain why 20 per cent of victims were men. Besides the re-creation of patriarchy, which was an attack on women in general, there was also the factor of structural transformation of the economy (and society) from a production for use basis, with a communitarian or patrimonial moral economy to a capitalist production for exchange, with a market-based ethic of individualism.

The re-creation of patriarchy along with capitalist transformation together overdetermine witch hunting as women-hunting. Women could be targeted both for transgressing the norms of patriarchal behaviour and for following the dictates of accumulation. On the other hand, the connection of witch accusations with capitalist transformation, by itself, can give us accumulating men as victims of witch hunts.

The third explanatory factor of the culture of beliefs in people who have magical or supernatural powers to cause harm also comes into play. Again, this is overdetermined for women, who are by nature thought to be weak and susceptible to diabolical pacts. At the same time, there were beliefs in some

particular sets of men, such as shepherds or blacksmiths, who were thought to carry out magical practices akin to witchcraft. The social understanding of the knowledge of these particular sets of men could change from a positive role in production to a negative role as witchcraft. This could lead to particular sets of men, shepherds or blacksmiths, being targeted as supposed witches. Among the Sami of Artic Norway and in Iceland, men dominated the sphere of pre-Christian magic and this was continued into Christian witch hunts, as argued in Hagen (2006) and Morris (2014) for the Sami and Iceland, respectively. Combining all three factors, culture, patriarchy, and structural transformation, can account for both the overall trend of woman hunting in early modern Europe and the specific, profession- or country-based, deviations in the 20 per cent of cases.

The social meaning of witch accusations

Using the implied approach of gender roles and norms, can one resolve the issue of witch hunts being women-related but not women-specific? Moving away from witchcraft beliefs to witch hunts forces us to take account not of the supposed supernatural powers used for evil but of the social factors in the occurrence of witch hunts or witch accusations in early modern Europe. One may rephrase the question posed to E. E. Evans-Pritchard by his African respondent, 'Why in early modern Europe, and why overwhelmingly women?' This can only be investigated by looking at the social context of changing gender roles and the social context of witch persecution. Larner, in fact, begins the process of making this transition from witchcraft beliefs to witch hunts, and relates accusations against women to those who refuse to accept the male-defined rules about women's position and roles (Larner 1981: 100). This is a statement not about witch beliefs but about gender roles and their transgression.

The accusation of being a witch means, in all conditions, that the accused is thought to have used supernatural powers to cause harm to someone. This meaning is common to all witch accusations. However, the social meaning of the accusation would differ depending on the relations between the accused and the accuser. For instance, in one case the accused might be the typical old poor woman who asked for the traditionally due economic support and that support was denied by the better-off accuser. Or the accuser could be the poor woman who accuses a better-off man of having acquired his wealth by using mysterious means to harm ordinary peasants as, for instance, was often the case in England (Macfarlane 1970), Germany, and the Netherlands (de Blecourt 2000: 63–4). Or it could be a case of women charged with transgressing the gendered division of labour, where the business of fishing

was in the male domain, as was said to have occurred in the western part of the Netherlands (de Blecourt 2000: 64).

What these examples show is that witch accusations can be used in an instrumental manner and that, consequently, the meaning of the accusation would differ with the social context. In the first case, the meaning of the witch accusation is a denial of a traditional relationship of support to old women. In the second case, the accusation acquires meaning as the denunciation of supposedly illicit profiteering. In the third case, it is a matter of women transgressing existing gender norms, divisions of labour, and power. The social meaning of witch accusations thus changes with the context of the accusations.

Witchcraft beliefs can be seen as beliefs in themselves, although that would not lead to an adequate social analysis of those beliefs as there is a relationship between beliefs and social actions. On the contrary, witch hunts as social phenomena can only be looked at in the social context in which they occur. But beliefs about witchcraft also need to be looked at in a social context, particularly if we wish to chart out ways to overcome witch hunts. If our endeavour is to understand widespread beliefs, even their meaning can only be brought out in a social context.

In addition, even in terms of meaning, women were thought of as being by nature deviant, since 'all fully normal human beings were men' (Goodare 2016: 283). Binary thinking was part of both theology and ordinary thinking. In this theological and ordinary view, witches are women, and thus witch accusations are gender-specific. The gender-specific nature of women as witches is reinforced by the social implication of such a belief. It is not that all women were attacked as witches, but that the attack on some women could have an impact on all women who are potential witches. 'Witch hunting was a powerful reinforcement to community pressures to conformity: people feared an accusation being brought, even before it happened' (Goodare 1998: 303). Yet there were also examples of large-scale killings of women, such as the extermination of almost the entire female population of some fishing villages in northern Norway (Hagen 2006). Larner wrote that all women are potential witches (1981), thereby putting forward a strong point against her own argument that witches were not women-specific.

Men as witches

So, how do the 20 per cent of men witches come into this gender-specific picture? The first point is that, unlike in the case of women, not all men were potential witches. The categories of men who were accused were quite narrow and heterogeneous. Among the Sami, as with other peoples of the

Arctic region including Sibera, men were shamans who had connections with the spirit world and performed rituals. When Christian influence spread witch hunts to the northern Norway region of Finnmark, the accused witches were all men shamans (Hagen 2006). In Iceland, parts of Finland, and Fennoscandia with similar male shamanism, more than 90 per cent of victims were men (Hagen 2013; Morris 2004).

Men in some professions were thought to use magic in their production practices. They included blacksmiths, working with fire, and shepherds, with knowledge of the animal world. In Normandy, France, most accused were male shepherds (Briggs 2009), while blacksmiths were the male accused in Holstein and the Rhine-Meuse area of Germany (ibid.). A tradition of male magic could be the reason for male witches in some regions (Levack 2013). Connections with the accused women was another factor that could lead to men being secondary accused. All the male witches in Scotland investigated by Larner were linked by marriage with female witches, were folk healers, or were criminals on other grounds (Goodare 1998: 304).

Yet another way could be by men themselves transgressing their own gender roles and norms, that is, not being masculine as good men. As summarized by Walinski-Kiehl (2004), in Germany, accused men had the negative traits of bringing the family into debt, involvement in questionable businesses practices, theft, drunkenness, gambling, bigotry, and adultery. Some similar traits were also noted by Elizabeth Kent for New England, United States, and England along with economic aggression and self-interest (Kent 2005).

Two other important categories of male witches were vagrants and persons with questionable business practices. Since the itinerant population was largely male, vagrants rounded up as witches would be male (Briggs 2009). An important category, important in that it was related to the new profit-oriented economic relations that were developing, was that of the 'profit-making man'. Willem de Blecourt's analysis of witch accusations in the Dutch Republic identified the profit-making man as the 'epitome of individual gain and attainment in a surrounding that valued the communal' (de Blecourt 2009: 299). The final category of male accused was that of men caught up in widespread witch panics, as in parts of Germany. In such witch panics, the initial familiar category of women witches spread to include men too.

The extension of men being witch accused (20 per cent or so of the total accused in early modern Europe) can then be explained in three ways. The first is for accused men to be transgressing their masculine gender norms by not being good providers, thus failing in the socially defined patriarchal role. This would extend gender norms from dealing with women's roles to also including men's gendered roles. The bad provider and the vagrant would both fit into categories of men who transgress normal expectations

about masculine norms. The second is of men who are in communication with the spirit world and could put this to evil use. This is overall a minor factor, occurring among the Sami and and in Iceland in the Arctic region, a counterpart to women who are in communication with or possessed by the devil. The third is that of men who symbolize new individualistic and profit-making values of trade and business and, in the process, violate existing communal norms of sharing or not taking advantage of what in a capitalist world would be considered normal business opportunities. This requires bringing our third explanatory variable, that of structural or major socio-economic transformation, into the analysis of witch hunts. The fact that a vast majority of accused witches were women, while some 20 per cent were men, can be explained by a combination of struggles over establishing patriarchy and socio-economic transformation, with the background cultural factor of thinking that they were people who could use supernatural powers to cause harm to other humans.

Our conclusion from this short summary of men as witch accused in early modern Europe is that they fell into certain well-defined categories, unlike in the case of women, where any woman could be accused of being a witch. As Julian Goodare puts it, 'If you were a man [in early modern Europe], you could be confident that witches were other people; nobody would accuse you of witchcraft unless you fell within quite narrow categories. If you were a woman, you could not be sure; a witch could easily be you' (2016: 311).

Changes in gender relations

We now turn to an analysis of the nature of these structural transformations, particularly in gender relations and their connection to witch hunts. Goodare takes the position that patriarchy was already well established in early modern Europe (2016). This may be correct. But patriarchy is not just one thing or an invariant set of relations. Patriarchy, as overall male domination, can vary from one type of production system to another. In a feudal production system, there was a set of gender relations based on the peasant household as a unit of production, with the male head of the household owning the land, paying taxes, and being the legally recognized adult responsible for the actions of all members of the household, including his wife. In an economy based on wage labour, the gender relations may well change, with the male worker performing the external wage labour, while the woman undertakes the unpaid and unrecognized domestic work. Gender relations in both of these systems could be called patriarchy, but they are not the same. Consequently, it is necessary to look at the changes in gender relations that were brought about, with witch hunts playing a key role, in early modern Europe.

Scholars of witch hunts have pointed out the ways in which witch hunts come into the picture in enforcing certain types of gender relations. Larner writing on Scotland held that the pursuit of witches was necessary in enforcing moral and theological conformity (1981: 102), while Goodare argued that witch hunts were meant to modify gender-related behaviour (2016), and Hagen writing on Norway held that witch hunts punished and limited unacceptable women's behaviour (2006). The very fact that protracted witch persecutions and witch hunts were carried out is testimony that there was a process of struggle in establishing the new forms of gender relations, that they were not just decreed and accepted but had to be enforced, with severe punishments for transgressing these norms.

In the earlier analysis of the creation of patriarchy in indigenous societies (Chapter 6), we looked at patriarchy as a set or vector of spheres of social, including political, religious, and economic, activity, in which women's behaviour was sought to be constrained by patriarchal rules of behaviour, with punishments, in the shape of witch persecutions for transgression of those norms of behaviour. Here, we look at ways in which women's behaviour was sought to be constrained in early modern Europe. Our examples are drawn from the literature across Europe and New England. However, examples from any one country do not cover the full range of the above spheres of social existence. Nevertheless, the overall mosaic does form a pattern of gender relations and gender hierarchies that were sought to be established or reinforced.

Women's sexual freedom in question

In the Middle Ages, women were not legal subjects. They were kept out of the courts as fathers or husbands were legally responsible for their actions. However, as part of the Reformation and other ways in which individualism spread as the doctrine of early modern Europe, women became legal subjects. While this was an advance, with this there was also the criminalization of women's offences: '... women suddenly appeared in the courts in large numbers, the old women as witches, the young as infanticides' (Larner 2008b: 175).

The independence of acquiring the status of legal subjects, further, was subject to women's sexual behaviour now being regulated by the state, unlike the situation in the late medieval period (Goodare 2016: 284). In addition, what were earlier ecclesiastical or church-regulated offences now became regulated by the state. Not only witchcraft but also adultery, fornication, sodomy, incest, infanticide, and prostitution became criminal offences. And as Karlsen points out in the case of Essex (England) and New England, the

courts were reluctant to prosecute men for sexual offences (1998: 196), and the onus of sexual morality fell on women.

Identified as sexual beings, women, however, were regarded as sexually deviant (Monter 1976: 296). Thus women's sexuality was to be kept under male control, while women's nurturing role was to be emphasized (Goodare 1998). Women's sexuality was what made them likely to be possessed by the devil, and, as Monter points out for France and Switzerland, during trials the 'witch marks' were looked for in women's genital areas (Monter 1976: 296). Older, probably pre-Christian practices of the carnival and the licence they provided for pre-marital sex also came under attack (Whitney 1995). While the sexuality of girls and young women was supposed to be controlled by their fathers and that of married women by their husbands, the dangerous women were those, older unmarried women and widows, who were not under male control—and thus likely to be witches (Monter 1976: 124).

Women after menopause who no longer fulfilled the role of procreation too were in the category of likely witches (Godbeer 2013 on New England), presumably because sex for them was no longer related to procreation. The stress on motherhood was also seen in the 'Domestic Breast' (Yalom 1997: 93), stressing that nursing mothers were pleasing to God. There is mention of one supposed witch, Magdalena Dürr of Rothenburg, who was accused of 'unmotherly' behaviour towards children (Robisheaux 2013). The attacks on women extended beyond sexuality to their knowledge of reproduction and the ability to control, to some extent, fertility and birth.

Attack on reproductive knowledge of women

Both of the infamous texts on witch hunts, the German *Malleus Maleficarum* (the Witches' Hammer) of Henrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger and the French *Demonomanie* of Jean Bodin, railed against midwives and various forms of birth control commonly practised by women in that period. Ordinary women through their use of herbs in cooking also acquired knowledge of herbs for various medicinal purposes (Goodare 2016: 285). Midwives, however, had expert knowledge.

Persons who 'procured the medical means and performed the magical acts for aborting a fetus or killing a newborn child were midwives' (Heinsohn and Steiger 1999: 428–9). The 'witch-bull' of Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 referred to those who 'hinder men from begetting and women from conceiving' (Pope Innocent VIII [1484] 1973: 108). The *Malleus Maleficarum* of 1487 meant to be the handbook for witch hunters 'taught to witch hunters about their new *duties* deriving from the equally new inclusion of birth control in witch interdiction' (*Malleus Maleficarum*, quoted in Heinsohn and Steiger 1999:

433, emphasis in original). 'And our enquiry will ... be ... *specifically with regard to midwives*, who surpass all others in wickedness' (*Malleus Maleficarum*, quoted in Heinsohn and Steiger 1999: 435, emphasis in original).

The midwives were the carriers of expert knowledge about birth control. That midwives and women as such possessed a wealth of knowledge about contraception and carrying out abortions has been discussed by John Riddle, author of the 1987 book *Eve's Herbs: A History of Contraception and Abortion in the West*, which was reviewed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* by Madeleine Cosman (1998), a historian of medicine, who states that successful contraception and abortion are not modern phenomena. There was an earlier knowledge of pharmacopoeia of herbal abortifacients and contraceptives which was lost. 'Criminalization of knowledge of contraception and abortion by prosecuting early midwives as witches, and by later legislating abortion as criminal felony, created politically correct ignorance' (1998: 86).

Gunnar Heinsohn and Otto Steiger further suggest that

> ... the great witch hunt was initiated to suppress the traditional and highly sophisticated means of birth control (the enigmatic content) by eliminating its experts, midwives (the enigmatic target), regarded as a serious obstacle to the repopulation of Europe after the great economic devastation of the population catastrophe of 1348 to 1475 (the enigmatic timing). By wiping out the tolls of procreative manipulation, this mercantilistic policy ... triggered the European population explosion. (1999: 435–6)

An attack on women's sexuality and their control of reproductive processes, however limited that control, was one background factor in early modern witch hunts in Europe. It was part of the process of redefining women's gender role as primarily defined by procreation.

Mercantilism and population policy

But why was there a change in state policy with regard to birth control? Early modern Europe was preceded by the Black Death (1348–52) that substantially reduced Europe's population. The repopulation of Europe became a matter of state policy and resulted in what is known as the European population explosion. The growth of population was brought about by reducing, even eliminating, women's ability to control the birth process, thus enabling an increase in children per woman.

The prevailing mercantilist theory of economic growth, one of the propounders of which was the same Jean Bodin of *Demonomanie* fame, understood economic growth as dependent on population growth and

having an export surplus. Growth took place not through an intensification or increase in productivity, as in the later theory of Adam Smith. It occurred through the extension of cultivation, which required population growth. This mercantilist theory was well served by the *Demonomanie* theory, which advocated an attack on women's control over reproduction. As Heinsohn and Steiger (1999) point out, there is no contradiction between Bodin's mercantilist theory of economic growth and his demonology; they both mesh together, creating the ideological base of patriarchal control on women.

Is there any evidence of the above theory? There is the evidence of the texts themselves, targeting midwives and decrying women's interference with the 'natural' birth process. Then, there are the number of midwives who were persecuted. In commenting on the Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English thesis (1983) of attacks on midwives as a key component of the European witch hunts, it has been pointed out that midwives constituted a relatively small portion of persecuted witches. That may well be so. But the number of midwives prosecuted does not have to be a high proportion. It could suffice that there be attacks on some midwives to successfully deter others. This, in conjunction with the demonology theory that made showing knowledge of contraception and abortion illegal, could be sufficient to scare other midwives into abandoning their practice. As Bodin himself put it, 'to strike awe in some by the punishment of others' (Bodin [1580] 1973: 214). The overall fervour of increasing birth rates, in conjunction with the demonizing of midwifery, could result in a loss of the knowledge of birth control, driving it underground. The midwives were the experts in this system of knowledge, and the attacks on their profession would have damaged the knowledge of birth control. This could have been supported by 'early medical and surgical guilds, … [which] eliminated mid-wives' strong competition for women patients' (Cosman 1998: 86).

Women specialized in reproduction and men in production

The attack on women's control over reproduction resulted in a new gender division of labour within the household. In peasant households, for example, many types of food were processed by women within the family. Along with this, healing was carried out in the home. Women with their knowledge of herbs were also the domestic healers. Wise women healers also came under scrutiny as possible witches (Larner 2006a: 176). Or '... they often had a fund of arcane knowledge of herbs and special formulae which could be used to cure as well as to harm ...' (Monter 1976: 200). Besides healing, dairying, brewing, and cloth production were also carried on within the household.

In the early modern production, some of these crafts became commercialized, changing the structure of the household economy.

Some areas of production were already clearly male-dominated, and when women trespassed into these areas, they could be denounced as witches. This was the case with fishing in the Netherlands (de Blecourt 2000) and in northern Norway (Hagen 2006, 2013). In the latter case, there were instances where virtually all women were killed in some villages: '... this kind of slaughtering of women on a mass scale can be interpreted as the demonization of a female insurrection' (Hagen 2006). Women's specialization in reproduction, along with the shifting of some former household production to non-household, commercial production, together created a new division of labour in the peasant households of early modern Europe; women specialized in reproduction, and men in production.

Having voice: the offence of women

Characteristic features of women's behaviour were also demonized, such as those of cursing or quarrelling, which is another way of saying that they did not just take things quietly. While men would settle quarrels by violence, getting into a fight, women were more likely to use words in settling disputes (Goodare 1998). This gender difference in the means of settling disputes led to the notion that women were more likely to curse and even that women's cursing was more dangerous than men's cursing (Goodare 1998: 275). The result, as Larner puts it with wry humour: 'The women who went to the stake during the witch hunt went cursing, often for the crime of cursing' (2006a: 254).

'Scolding' or being argumentative was also an offence. In Scotland, it was an offence, and in 'the period in which scolding was punished was also the period of the witch hunt ... and all those punished for scolding were women' (Goodare 1998). Thus, a woman with a 'sharp tongue and filthy temper' (Larner 2006b) was likely to be denounced as a witch. As Keith Thomas puts it, 'When a bad-tongued woman shall curse a party, and death shall follow shortly, this is a shrewd token that she is a witch' (1970: 512).

Patrilineal inheritance

The patriarchal systems of land inheritance in the male line were well established. But women who inherited land upset this system. Such women were particularly liable to be attacked as witches, as pointed out in the case of New England (Rowlands 2013).

The seizure of women's property was also noted in many European cases, as the desire of either relatives or magistrates to seize a witch's property. 'The wealth of these women varied very greatly, but as mothers without sons or as women without brothers, they all stood in the way of orderly transmission of property from one generation of males to another' (Levack 2006: 159–60). In Salem and New England, the unsupported women who inherited land or were likely to inherit property were attacked for coming in the way of men with their rights to property and land (Godbeer 2013). Women's non-ownership of land and their mediated access to productive resources only through their relationship with men has been a feature of patriarchy. This was threatened by independent women owning land.

Attacking independence

It has already been mentioned that women who were single, widows and unmarried women, were liable to be attacked as witches because they did not conform to the ideal of being under patriarchal control. Hagen (2013) points out that in the Swedish region of Dalarna, there were many strong, emancipated, and independent women, likely due to the high male outmigration as soldiers. Many of these independent women were persecuted as witches. Larner concluded from her study of Scottish witch hunts: 'The pursuit of witches could therefore be seen as a rearguard action against the emergence of women as independent adults. The women who were accused were those who challenged the patriarchal view of the ideal woman' (1981: 102).

Women were expected to be subservient within the household. The French demonologist Jean Bodin had listed members of the household in their hierarchical order—wives came in last, after children, and even after servants and apprentices (Monter 1976: 121). This made women who were not under male control (widows and older single women) dangerous as they could defy subservience. Legally they had become independent adults. Witch hunting in early modern Europe was an instrument to control women from an unmediated right to voice, property, and knowledge in the family and wider society. Witch hunting was an attack on women's independence as a whole.

Features of primary accumulation

The long-drawn-out transformation in early modern Europe was summarized by Marx as the primary accumulation of capital. In this process, the enclosure of the commons was a major socio-economic transformation in early modern England. With the enclosure, rights in the commons were extinguished and

the land was privatized. There is an analysis of peasant work in that period which suggests that peasant women used the commons more than men did. The commons were used for grazing the peasants' own livestock, gathering some uncultivated produce and wood fuel for cooking too. All of these were women's tasks and thus women's work was more affected than that of men. Of course, overall the extinction of community rights in the commons meant that small peasant households could not turn to the commons for either inputs or some form of gathered produce. The dispossession through enclosure forced them to rely much more, or even entirely, on wage labour. This helped create the proletariat for the subsequent Industrial Revolution, at least as an unintended consequence of privatization for increasing accumulation.

The witch question came into play in the context of enclosure in the few examples given in Thomas (1971) and Kent (2006). Further there is Alan Macfarlane's (1970) finding that there were more witch persecutions in Essex in enclosed areas than in unenclosed areas. With women doing more of the work that was affected by enclosure, it would not be surprising that women led many of these resistances to enclosure and that such women ran the risk of being prosecuted as witches.

Yet another transformation was that in customary practices in processing and trading in food stuffs. This is the extinction of what E. P. Thompson called 'customs in common' (1971). There was much resistance to this process of changing norms in exchange from customary practices based on meeting consumption requirements, to full-fledged commercialization to accumulate profits. This too was a major socio-economic transformation. This would have led, much as enclosure did, to pauperization at the bottom and accumulation at the top. There is much evidence of resistance to this process of pauperization at one end and accumulation at the other end all over Europe. The persecution of the neighbour who asks and the neighbour who does not give is an example of the use of witch persecutions to promote accumulation in the former case, and to resist pauperization in the latter case. Competition over resources is also a manifestation, in a somewhat different manner, of the spirit of the capitalist market process.

Witch persecution is related to the movement from a subsistence and relatively stable economy to one of accumulation in two ways. It can be supportive of accumulation by denouncing as witches women who ask for their entitlements, thus negating the older moral economy of the community or village. Witch persecution can also be disruptive of accumulation by attacking those who are better off.

'Capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt' (Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 [1990]), but this well-known statement of Marx does not mention it—the blood of those, largely women, persecuted

and executed as witches was a major portion of the blood that accompanied the process of the formation of capitalism. It was left to feminist scholars, first Maria Mies in *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) and then Silvia Federici in *Caliban and the Witch* (2004) to make the connection between witch hunting as woman hunting and the transition to capitalism in early modern Europe.

The main features of the primary accumulation, in Marx's analysis, were, one, the formation of a money hoard or wealth as money and, two, the dispossession of producers from the means of production, thus forcing the landless to seek wage labour. We take up these in turn, relating them to witch hunts in early modern Europe.

The first was summarized by Marx in its actual historical process.

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. (*Capital*, Vol. 1, ch. 33 [1990])

Marx's summary of the formation of capital has been elaborated but remains essentially as in the statement above.

The above forms of triangular trade and appropriation may have been the major sources of capital of the subsequent industrialization. But there was also a process of capital formation within agriculture in early modern Europe. The obligations of the landlords or neighbours to give to the poor was often repudiated by the 'one who does not give', who were often attacked, particularly on the continent, as witches. These witch hunts tried to halt the spread of agrarian capitalism in early modern Europe and New England.

Other witch hunts, however, promoted the spread of agrarian capitalism. This was where the landlords and other better-off neighbours denounced the 'one who asks' as a witch. By ending their obligations to provide some support to the poor, the better off promoted their own accumulation. In England there was the form of the enclosure of the commons, promoting the private use of these lands for accumulation through the wool trade and denying their use to peasant women and their families. As noted earlier, these enclosures of the commons were often opposed by the peasant families, and led to many women and men being denounced as witches.

The elimination of women's control over birth through witch hunts, which we discussed earlier in this chapter, meant that women were confined to the production of children. This brought a new specialization, with women specialized in reproduction and men in production. This, Silvia Federici ([2004] 2013) says, was ignored by Marx but forms one of the features of

the formation of capitalism in Europe. However, women's specialization in reproduction was not as strict as it seemed. Rather, the specialization was also partly created by the non-recognition of women's labour, often carried out within the homestead, as not being work, but merely part of women's domestic service.

Many of the changes in early modern Europe were replicated, usually more brutally, in the colonial and the post-colonial developments in what we now call the Global South. However, the history of dispossession and accumulation begins with the early colonial periods, and it even brings about many changes in the nature of the witchcraft discourse and witch accusations.

STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Accumulation, Dispossession, and Persecution

8

This chapter connects witch hunts with the emerging capitalist economy. In this chapter we first take up the connections of indigenous peoples and peasants in developing economies with the market economy. This is followed by an analysis of how witch persecutions play out within the context of struggles over the change from subsistence to accumulative economies. At different points we make comparisons with situations in early modern Europe to show where similar processes of change and witch persecutions were taking place.

Looking at witch persecutions in contemporary indigenous and peasant societies and comparing them with witch hunts in early modern Europe brings out one important factor in common between these contexts—they are both situations of structural change and intense conflict. There are both those who opposed the changes from subsistence to accumulative economies and those who were in favour of such change. In this context, witch persecutions and hunting can take on the shape of both promoting accumulation or opposing accumulation. There are different moral economies, or even cultures, in conflict over here, and witch persecutions can play both brutal levelling and accumulating roles.

Indigenous societies and connection with capitalist economy

The importance of seeing witches and witch persecution in the context of the developing capitalist economy is now a common theme in discussions of the witch question, particularly after the collections edited by Jean and John Comaroff (1993b), Peter Geschiere's book *The Modernity of Witchraft* (1997), and then Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders (2001). We summarize

below our understanding of these connection across Africa, Latin America, other parts of Asia, and the Pacific, the last being represented by Papua New Guinea.

The relations of the indigenous peoples of central India with the state and market have changed over time. Markets have come to play an increasingly important role even in acquiring the necessities of daily life. Important is the spread of the ideology of accumulated development. This signalled a transition from Ranajit Guha's 'dominance without hegemony' to 'dominance through hegemony' (Guha 1997) of the ideas of market-based development, or capitalist development. But there need not be just one type of institutional set-up in a capitalist economy, as the varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001) or the alternative modernities literature (Gaonkar 2001; Appadurai 2001) both argue.

Given the importance of trade in the daily life of indigenous peoples, the point is that their struggles were not arguments against modernity, or the market economy; rather, they were arguments for their share of gains (economic and non-economic) within the market economy. Similarly, the witchcraft complex can also be seen not as an argument against modernity, but with modernity. As Harri Englund (1996), showing the involvement of virtually all adult persons in the market economy among the Dedza of central Malawi, points out, 'The major flaw in the Comaroffs' approach lies in their insistence that such phenomena as witchcraft beliefs should be interpreted as an argument *about* modernity and not merely viewed as operating *within* modernity' (1996: 259, emphasis in original).

Africa is the continent with the longest history of studies of witches. In a book with studies of Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Malawi, Ghana, Niger, Tanzania, and South Africa, the editors summarize the phenomena: 'In short, witches in Africa and their possibly increasing influence/incidence have long been associated with new forms of consumption, production and political control' (Moore and Sanders 2001: 15). Many examples could be given of this connection in Africa. Edwin Ardener (1970) looks at the Bantu-speaking Bakweri in Cameroon: 'With the advent of German rule the fertility of the soils was quickly recognized, and the area was developed as plantations—initially for tobacco and cocoa, and then bananas, rubber, oil-palm, and tea' (Ardener 1970: 142). This was accompanied by incidents of witch accusations and persecution.

In Latin America, the analyses by June Nash of Bolivia's tin mines (1977) and by Michael Taussig of Colombian mines (1977, 1980) both showed the new connections between indigenous ideas of the devil and wage labour in capitalism. In a book on dark shamanism in Amazonia, the introductory summing up points to '… the harsh realities that colonial or neo-colonial

contacts bring a vector for both the increase in anxieties about sorcery and the emergence of specific forms of occult violence' (Whitehead and Wright 2004: 10).

For Papua New Guinea, Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern point out that the new fears of witches '… were connected with the advent of a newly emerging cash economy based on the cultivation of coffee, along with other social changes' (2004: 114).

In the United States, the infamous Salem witch trials were set in the context where 'the social order was being profoundly shaken by a superhuman force which had lured all too many into active complicity. We have chosen to construe this force as emergent mercantile capitalism. Mather, and Salem, called it witchcraft' (Boyer and Nissenbaum 1974: 209).

In Europe the context has been conceptualized as the contrast between

> traditional or multi-stranded relationships with a somewhat idealized market economy. In the first, every transaction is a complex one, with the parties relating to one another on several different levels … The ideal market, on the other hand, is built around exchanges between strangers, simply determined by price and convenience. (Briggs 1998: 149)

In Arica the trans-Atlantic slave trade seems to have been accompanied by the idea that the wealth from such trade was morally tainted (Redding 2019: 5). In a story from Benin, cowrie shells as wealth were acquired by throwing corpses into the sea, which then came back covered with cowrie shells (ibid.: 5). Such wealth was morally tainted and acquired by the use of supernatural powers.

New economic context

Is this economic context new? The clearest statement of the absence of newness in the economic context of the witch question is that by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders:

> But is today's world really so different from previous times? Has there been an identifiable rupture, a definitive socio-historical break with the past? On the one hand, there *does* seem to be something categorically different about today's world—with its rapid flows of people, goods and ideas around the globe. On the other, at the same time, there are undeniable historical continuities in our world, and we should be extremely careful not to overplay the contrasts between the past and present, then and now, static and active, bounded and unbounded … (Moore and Sanders 2001: 18, emphasis added)

Jean and John Comaroff seem to make a similar claim of nothing being new—'none of these things is new, of course' (1997: 238)—but they repudiate this statement when they refer to '... unpredictable shifts in sites of production and the demand for labour' (ibid.: 294). If there was one thing new about the new economy, it was its unpredictability in allocation of resources, the demand for labour, and its consequences for women and men as individuals in the households and communities. What we have is a shift from an ergodic to a non-ergodic world (North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009). An ergodic world is stable, though not stagnant. In an ergodic word, those who own land or other resources expect that this will continue. But in a non-ergodic world, there need not be such a stable distribution of resources. Resources can be lost or gained, and the world of tomorrow need not be as it is today. This is a feature of capitalism and not of ealier systems of production.

The question is not of dichotomies but of history. In the name of ending dichotomies, one ends up ending history, as though everything that is always was. There are continuities, as in the existence of external trade from forms of 'silent trade' to more regular trade in surpluses to trade becoming part of the communities' basic economic subsistence or reproduction. But it is also useful to identify breaks in these histories so that clear changes in economic direction, or structural transformation, can be identified.

So, what is new about the context of the emerging capitalist economy in its different globalizing variants? It is not just the context but even the economy of the indigenous peoples that changed or its history that changed. In fact, one might say that the changing context was instrumental in bringing about changes in the internal economy, not through some *deus ex machina* but through changes in the possibilities for production and consumption and even in the desires of those concerned.

Taking possibilities first, they change in a number of ways. One is by allowing for the possibility of trade, thus enabling an increase in the scale of production. Among the indigenous people in Tripura, northeast India, before roads were constructed to connect to external markets, the excess harvest that could not be consumed through feasting was left to rot (Das Gupta 2002). Besides trade in surplus staples, otherwise unused or little used products, such as lac in Jharkhand, had a market with new uses.

One way of using the new possibilities, including increasing employment as wage labour whether or not through migration, was a manner of procuring for use. As has often been commented upon, gatherer-hunters would not work as wage labourers for as long as such work was available, but only for as long as they needed to earn what they wanted. This is, of course, Marshall Sahlins' *original affluent society*, where the extent of production is limited by the consumption needs of the producers. Wage labour becomes one more

way of meeting relatively stable consumption needs, as Nurit Bird-David had shown with regard to the Naiken gatherer-hunters of south India (1983).

But needs do change, to an extent brought about by greater contact. Aspirations do change, even if there is a discordance between aspirations and the capacity to fulfil them (Appadurai 2004). These changed aspirations cannot be just dismissed as 'consumerism' but can relate to the desire to acquire newer capabilities. For instance, an old woman from the Chenchu, recently settled gatherer-hunters in Andhra Pradesh, said that she did not want her daughter to grow up to be like her: 'When I go to the bus stop, I have to ask people to show me which bus to take, since I cannot read. I want my daughter to be able to read, so that she does not have to face such humiliation.' Health services, sanitation, cooking fuel that does not create household air pollution—these are some other needs, not to mention the now ubiquitous mobile phone and television. In a general manner, this change can be put down as the development of new capabilities through education, health, and new production possibilities. Besides state-provided or state-supported public goods, there is also the need for higher household or individual income to secure these capabilities.

What this means is that these needs for higher capabilities cannot be met by the continuation of just traditional production. An increase in the area of cultivation, growth in the extensive frontier, does not increase per capita income. An increase in per capita income requires growth on the intensive frontier, where per capita output can increase. This can be done in a number of ways. One is to intensify agriculture by increasing the investment of inputs, such as with irrigation and fertilizer, to increase output per unit of land. Another is to increase the number of agricultural seasons, for instance, by growing vegetables after the main crop season. Yet another is to move into high-value crops, such as coffee. To an extent, and where land availability permits, there can be an increase in agriculture using previously unused labour. An instance of the latter is provided in Maurice Godelier's example of the extension of cultivation among the Baruya of New Guinea to be able to buy the new steel instruments, knives, and axe heads that became available and replaced the formerly self-produced stone instruments (Godelier 1986).

Migration has become an important way of securing the extra income needed to meet consumption needs. As pointed out for rural Niger,

> for villagers throughout Niger, domestic survival now hinges on the additional income provided by young family members who, for the most part, migrate yearly to take poorly paid, unskilled jobs in West African metropolises. (Masquelier 2000: 96)

Of course, along with new possibilities, there is the inevitable exploitation, risk, and even uncertainty. We are in a globalized capitalist world. Output prices can fall. There can even be immiserizing growth, as terms of trade turn against primary producers, according to the Prebish-Singer thesis. Migration can lead to trafficking. These and many more are the new issues of exploitation. But the creation of new problems does not mean that some problems have not been solved.

When accumulation becomes possible and necessary, surpluses can be traded and the resulting income saved or invested. The shift from a subsistence to an accumulative economy is the identifiable rupture that Moore and Sanders (2001) ask for or the new thing that the Comaroffs (1997) think does not exist. The shift from a subsistence to an accumulative economy, usually accompanied by a shift from communal to private property, is something that can be described as a structural transformation (Nathan and Kelkar 2003) because of the manner in which not just production orientation (that is, subsistence and accumulation) but also production relations (communal and private profits) and literally every aspect of social existence are transformed. Occurring in the context of capitalism there is not just the movement to private property but also the domination of the market over society, what Michael Polanyi called the 'Great Transformation' (1971). These are changes not only in the external relations of indigenous economy but also in their internal relations. They have consequences for various aspects of socio-economic relations. Before proceeding to deal with the accompanying impacts on the persecution and killing of women as witches, it will be useful to deal with another limitation of these critiques of the global capitalist economy, or modernization.

The motif that binds together the 'there is nothing new' view of global capitalism is that of the 'immiserizing effects of late capitalism' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 294). This is stated in a somewhat different way, though leading to the same conclusion of immiserization, which is referred to as 'a world of ever-diminishing opportunities' (Nyamnjoh 2001: 31). We should contrast this view of the world with that of Achille Mbembe, who refers to the problems caused by the rapid growth of the rate of per capita consumption in the Nile region (2000: 273). As we mentioned in the Introduction to this volume, the indigenous and peasant societies of Asia, Africa, and Central and South America do require economic growth to reach currently acceptable standards of living.

The growth of the Asian economies, and of most African economies more recently, is an empirical statement about the possibility of non-immiserizing growth. Along with this economic growth, while per capita

incomes and inequality have grown, there is nevertheless a decrease in the incidence of poverty and, importantly, an increase in human development in these economies. Admittedly, along with this there has been an increase in social inequalities, and gender inequalities in particular have widened and deepened. Indigenous peoples have been particularly hard hit, often subject to dispossession by the state and capital.

But the critiques we are dealing with here hark back to non-accumulative economies, to zero-sum economies—where there are 'ever-diminishing opportunities' (Nyamnjoh 2001: 31) or '... the labor market is destroyed' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 290). The expansion of the global labour force without an increase in the global market for labour was a familiar trope in early analyses of the effects of the entry of hundreds of millions of workers from China and India into the global labour force (Freeman 2006). But as pointed out in Nathan (2007), this analysis ignores the increase in demands for goods and services from the newly employed workers and the growing middle classes of these countries, now apparent, with their categorization as 'emerging economies' and with China competing with the United States for world hegemony.

Detailed case studies of labour in global value chains in Asia show clear, though limited, increases in workers' wages and even improvements in conditions of employment, depending, to an extent, on the ways of struggle, both formal and informal (Nathan, Tewari, and Sarkar 2016). Both wage increases and improvements in work conditions are limited, and there is still some way to go before sweatshops are eliminated and conditions approximating decent work are achieved. Some forms of livelihood and employment have been destroyed, and the new ones created often do not benefit those who have lost their jobs, as is the case with mineral-industrial complexes in indigenous peoples' areas. New opportunities, however unevenly distributed, do get created. But it is not a world of 'ever-diminishing opportunities' or the 'destruction of the labour market'.

We have taken up the weaknesses of these critiques of global capitalism because the notions of 'ever-diminishing opportunities' and 'destruction of the labour market' lead to a strange analysis of the role of witch-killings: 'Killing these "perverts" by fire—itself a *simultaneous* destruction and re-birth—bespoke the efforts to engender a more propitious, socially constructive, mode of reproduction' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 288, emphasis in original). We will return to this important question of whether witch persecutions and all the attendant horrors portend attempts to build 'a more propitious, socially constructive mode of reproduction' or even constitute a counter-hegemonic discourse.

Growth of inequality

The result of the above economic trends is the growth of inequality in the indigenous communities. This new inequality is different in character from earlier inequality. Earlier, these communities had very slight differences. The village priest, *ojha*s, *bhagat*s, and the village head had somewhat more and better quality land than other village residents. But along with having more and better land, these hereditary village officials also had responsibilities of feasting fellow villagers on some occasions. Other than this relatively limited inequality, the rest of the village population was barely different from one another.

The new inequality relates to differential access to new forms of income. Higher agricultural income requires use of purchased inputs, such as fertilizer, along with investments in irrigation, both of which depend on access to finance. This finance itself depends on earnings or remittances from migration and higher level jobs, as resulting among indigenous peoples in India from reservation in government and public sector services. These are inequalities arising from differential access within formerly relatively similar households. Furthermore, these inequalities are also cumulative in that they can be passed on. For instance, those with government jobs will be able to leverage or pass on the benefit to their children, through better quality education. As you go around indigenous peoples' areas in Jharkhand, you can easily identify the better quality housing of those with government jobs.

Simultaneously, indigenous women from rural poor households have experienced increased violence, sexual and physical, in both the domestic and work arenas, and denial of their rights to own land or use forests. Young women from states such as Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh in India migrate to cities and are mostly engaged as domestic workers or low-skilled workers in garment industries. Both these workplaces deny them decent work conditions and adequate remuneration and further subject them to sexual and physical harassment and insults. Surprisingly, though they send most of their earnings to their parental homes yet they face the threat of being treated as 'loose women' who find it difficult to get a partner, marry, or set up independent households. New forms of modern slavery particularly affect the younger generation of indigenous women and girls from the displaced and resource-poor households.

Another form of inequality in these market-based accumulations is that between these peasant or worker households and those they deal with in the market—traders, moneylenders, and the corporations that buy their products and employ them as wage workers. These inequalities are far more substantial than those based on their relations with other peasant and worker households.

Should all types of inequalities, those within formerly equal peoples and between these peoples and those they relate to in the market, be dealt with

in the same manner? Admittedly, women were not an equal part of these equal peoples; for example, decision-making within the home and outside, ownership and control of land, and other productive resources have continued to be with men in these societies. Within the capitalist economy, however, the traders, moneylenders, and corporations economically are distant from the rural poor and indigenous peoples. On the other hand, the somewhat better-off households and individuals within their own communities are socially and closely connected and easily identifiable. There can well be a tendency to deal with the immediately visible inequalities rather than the more fundamental inequality that is somewhat distant and barely perceived.

In what manner do we find these inequalities understood in the witch hunt cases? Our analysis of witch persecutions points out that victims were almost always kin group members. The witch question is largely an intra-community affair. As Geschiere puts it in a dramatic manner, witchcraft is the dark side of kinship (2013), and kin are not the persons culpably involved in the main inequality that develops with market-based development, that between the owners of corporations, large traders, and moneylenders and the peasants and workers of the indigenous communities. The witchcraft imaginary deals with kin-based and relatively neighbourly inequalities rather than with the more fundamental, but distant, inequalities.

However, there are some indigenous imaginaries where the owners of capital, mines or mine owners, for instance, in Bolivia and Colombia, are identified as the devil (see Nash 1972 for Bolivia, and Taussig 1977 for Colombia). Surely such imaginaries must be distinguished from those that identify persons of the same community of workers or peasants as those culpable for the inequalities of the capitalist economy. For instance, young men in South Africa when killing a woman, who actually provided some of them employment, are reported to have shouted, 'Die, die, you witch. We can't get work because of you' (Ralushai Commission 1998: 206, 212). Or among the Hausa of rural Niger, it is not employers in Nigeria but migrants from Niger, earning some more, who are denounced as 'soul-eaters' that consume the life essence of their fellows (Schmoll 1993).

There are two ways in which accumulation links up with the witch question: (*a*) That accumulation, as by capitalists, mine owners, and others outside the community, is the result of being the devil, sucking the blood of workers or turning them into zombies—that is, the work of the accumulators—and (*b*) members of one's own community (or kin group) who become better off. Why is it that witch persecutions are restricted to people, basically women, of their own kin group and not to the capitalists or mine owners? This is a question we have to confront as we deal with witchcraft beliefs as a form of explanation of economic and social distress.

Levelling: dispossession of the better-off

In our case studies (in the states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Telangana), in 31 out of 110 cases witches were those who were better off—often, though not always, connected with their not giving to those who were not so well off. We give some examples of jealousy from our case studies.

In India, there is the infamous example of the killing of the family of the relatives of the late Ram Dayal Munda, former vice chancellor of Ranchi University. The villagers who killed the family and then surrendered to the police are reported to have said that the family had ceased connections with the rest of the village and did not even share rice beer (*haria*) with them (personal communication, Sanjay Bosu-Mullick).

Gurmi Devi, a resident of Khunti district of Jharkhand, was subjected to harassment at the hands of her brother-in-law Tirkey, who started to call Gurmi Devi a *dayaan* (witch) and beat her up. Tirkey's son was eight months old when he fell ill, but he was not taken to a doctor for treatment due to which the child succumbed to his illness. The death was blamed on Gurmi Devi, where she was accused of using witchcraft on the child, causing him to die.

She had become financially secure by cultivating her land and rearing livestock to sustain her family and herself. She even worked on other people's fields, which helped her even more to provide for her family. Her brother-in-law did not like this and felt jealous of her growing success. Therefore, he started to call her a witch.

Among the Khasi of Meghalaya, in northeast India, '... suspicion and jealousy as a result of wealth and status towards a given family or person contributes to the demonic ascription which later culminated in death and tragedy' (Lyngdoh 2015). Such people were accused of feeding the *khlem* or serpent with human blood in order to accumulate wealth. In northern Thailand, those who were better off were reported to have been resented by other villagers and driven out (Ganjanapan 1984).

What happened to the land of the family that was driven out? In Xishuangbanna in Yunnan, China, our investigations showed that the headman, who was appointed from above, seized the land of those driven out. For instance, in Man Jing Dai village, a woman named Mi Mance was denounced as *pippa* and driven out along with her son because, she said, the village headman wanted to seize her fish pond and wood grove. Similar seizures were reported in all the villages we investigated. Anan Ganjanapan reports that in Lanna (northern Thailand) the land was seized by the minor local lords: 'In most cases the petty *caw* (aristocrats of the northern Thai royal family)

benefitted by confiscating the land, as no one else dared to take the abandoned fields lest they be associated with the expelled *phi ka*' (1984: 325). In our cases in central India, land belonging to those driven out or killed was often seized by those making the accusation or others in the village.

Jealousy: levelling

In our field investigations, the frequent discussion was of jealousy of those doing better. Jealousy as a background reason for witch accusations also comes up in some other studies: 'The money she received from him [migrant husband] every month became the root cause for her brother-in-law's jealousy' (Mishra 2003: 61). And in another instance, 'We were leading a calm and quiet life and my family was well-settled. Maybe this was the reason they labeled me as a witch' (ibid.: 95).

As the Comaroffs put it, 'the usual suspects of African witchcraft—men and women of conspicuous, unshared wealth' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 287). They gain this wealth of others by sucking the blood, entering into a pact with the devil, or in some way utilizing other members of the group. In some African countries, the changes in wealth were attributed to witchcraft, and there developed a new 'witchcraft of wealth' whether in Cameroon (Geschiere 2013: 201) or Ghana (ibid.: 187). They are supposed to have benefited in one way or another from exploiting other members of the community, those who have not benefited as much or have even suffered from the new economy. As among the Hausa of rural Niger, those who become better off are 'soul-eaters' who are said to have consumed the life of their fellows out of insatiable craving (Schmidt, quoted in Comaroff and Comaroff 1993a: xxv). Or, as summarized by Ralph Austen, 'ascendant individuals are perceived to be witches' (Austen 1993: 90). In the case of Papua New Guinea, a variant in the attack on the better-off is where they are denounced as witches not for having accumulated some wealth but for not having subsequently shared this with not just immediate family but also other kin, who in the earlier economic system had a claim on the income and riches of other kin. This is the new witch persecution system in Papua New Guinea. In Zambia, workers are reported to dread retirement, as they could be charged with being witches and forced to part with a lot of their retirement money (Ntloedibe-Kuswani 2007: 236).

A distinction is made between those who give something back and those who do not. As Jane Parish reports of a woman from Ghana: 'I give money to my relatives. I help them all the time. They appreciate my wealth because I am a good sister and they enjoy it too' (1999: 437). On the contrary, there are those who do not give anything back (ibid.: 438). Thus, in such witch

accusations, there is not a condemnation of wealth acquisition as such, but with the manner in which wealth is used, whether the benefits are spread within the community or not. Wealth acquisition itself is not immoral; immorality lies in the manner in which the wealth is used.

As numerous studies across Africa, India, Southeast Asia, United States, Europe, and Amazonia point out, jealousy, linked to changes in fortunes as economic systems change, is a key factor in witch persecution. In some of our case studies, those who do better are not necessarily well off, just somewhat better than the rest. For instance, Chunki of Jharkhand worked hard to put her son through school. When her son passed his school exams and then could get a job, neighbours were jealous of them and denounced her as a witch. Another woman, Gudiya Devi of Jharkhand earned some money from selling fruit from their trees. This incited jealousy in the village, and the villagers accused her of being a witch.

Thus, even small amounts of additional income, higher farm yields, a cleaner house, and children who passed high school could result in witch denunciations. They may not even amount to what one would call accumulation of capital, but of being better off than neighbours and relatives. It did not even have to be conspicuous differences in income and consumption, as in the case of the relatives of Ram Dayal Munda. Just a little bit more, a cleaner house, or better-educated children could lead to jealousy and witch denunciation.

Jealousy is certainly not restricted to the communities or peoples we are studying. So, what we have to look at is not the existence of jealousy. The question we need to look at is why jealousy, and that within a family or lineage, translates itself into witch accusations and persecution. One factor that encourages such a connection is a belief system where women are the ones who bring evil to a family and its society. The political economy of change interacts with social norms that result in the identification of the better-off women as witches.

The indigenous communities have been described as *segmentary societies*, among whom there is a strong equality. In such an equality-based village if someone or some family were to get better off (other than the village headman and priest), then some social measures were carried out to re-establish a manner of equality. Some persons becoming better off is said to result in jealousy or *hisinga* (as it is known in the Mundari language). The village was then likely to require the better-off person to feast everyone in the village. For such a feast, the accused would have to sell a part, if not all, of their land. This would then bring that woman or family, who had grown big, down to the same level as the rest. Here, we have described the anti-inequality social norms or a belief system and disaccumulative actions of the

Munda, but similar notions and processes of action have existed among other societies in the region.

Such cases of redistributive levelling were a feature of segmented Adivasi (indigenous) societies; in fact, this mechanism enabled the community or village to maintain its cohesion. In a sense, this type of village mechanism was the process of a segmented village recreating its type of equality. This situation, however, changed as indigenous peoples' villages opened up, or were opened up, to the outside world. Through education some got jobs and thus got differentiated from the rest. The system of sharing worked to an extent where the newly enriched family stayed within the village. The obligation to feed members of the lineage who were in need redistributed some of the new-found riches (riches only in a relative sense, in that they had more than the rest of the residents). But when families migrated or their second generation compounded the advantages gained by the first generation, then the gap between them and the rest widened even further. Various possibilities of migration, other than to do a government job, also led to unequal access to income-earning opportunities.

Levelling in Europe

In early modern Europe, witch accusations were often brought against the better-off, the one who accumulates, who, however, is also the 'one who does not give' (Briggs 1996: 140). In the one who does not give model, the accused person is the well-off person who refused the earlier obligation. Accumulation or getting better off also involved denial of the former entitlements of the moral economy of the peasants and was resisted by the poor with denouncing the accumulators as witches.

In Salem, then British American, now the United States, the site of one of the most notorious witch hunts in history, the accusers were on average worse off than the accused, who were mainly from those who were better off or outsiders, though there were some who had suffered and lost their earlier status in the community (Boyer and Nisssenbaum 1974). Subsequent research modified the higher average income of the accused, estimated by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, but did not change their overall conclusion. Many were connected to the new, non-agricultural sources of wealth, such as trading, or were outsiders who disrupted the normal functioning of the village community, and were denounced as practising witchcraft.

The same point was expressed in a different manner by Richard Godbeer:

> Many of the accused were clearly perceived as outsiders, either literally or figuratively. The tense situation within Salem village itself paralleled crises

> in the region at large, as those villagers who feared and resented Salem Town came to see all those associated with it as the agents of a corrupt and evil world that threatened to destroy their way of life. (Godbeer 2013)

What is being referred to as not-giving may not be just charity refused. It could also be other economic actions, such as profiting from a shortage of food or other commodities. Here too there are traditional rules about the margins to be allowed for different transactions, such as milling and trading. Profiting from shortages attracted the anger of the poorer consumers. E. P. Thompson pointed out about eighteenth-century England that there was a popular consensus on what were legitimate or illegitimate practices in marketing, milling, baking, and so on (1971: 79). Though his analysis was of the eighteenth century, which is modern and not early modern, these features would have existed in the early modern period, since, as Thompson pointed out, 'the death of the old moral economy was … long drawn out …' (ibid.: 131).

In the Trier region of Germany, Jesuits embarked on 'an ardent campaign against witchcraft, building upon the widespread concern in the countryside, and exploiting common fears in a period of hardship …' (Behringer 2004: 95). Most of the 400 executed in the Trier witch hunt were men. Likewise, in Bamberg, Germany, many high officials such as lord mayors, councillors, canons, and members of the princely government were persecuted, 'all wealthy and male' (ibid.: 114). The wealthiest man in Trier had a reputation for sharp financial dealings, which turned into the accusation that he was the leader of a sect of witches who intended to benefit from the harvest failure and high grain prices (Briggs 2013).

In the Netherlands, there was the 'profit-making witch', a label that could be attached to entire families defined by the male line (de Blecourt 2009). Elizabeth Kent (2006) mentions one accused, Nicholas Stockdale, who had an ambivalent approach to economic activities, aimed at securing the best result for himself.

Wolfgang Behringer (1995) showed that Europe's Little Ice Age had an impact on witch accusations. Some of this, at least, worked through transformation of the economy, as in the Netherlands, where land sank below the sea level.

> Peasants had responded to this by shifting from agriculture to cattle-raising. They now turned into proto-capitalist entrepreneurs, who now produced cheese, butter and meat for an anonymous market and purchased things they could not, or were unwilling, to make themselves from craftsmen who specialized from the production of such things. (de Haardt 2013)

As would be expected, supposed witches were suspected of weather magic, spreading toxic powder on fields and poisoning animals—in short, with doing all that was likely to cause agrarian disaster and crises. Throughout Europe, it would seem, women were traditionally suspected of making weather harsher (Behringer 2004: 88). As pointed by Thomas Robisheaux (2013), in the subsequent witch panics, or what were known as chain reaction witch hunts, initially some 80 per cent of those prosecuted were women, while the number of men increased later on in the panics.

Many who were persecuted for profiting from scarcity, or, shall we say, following new business practices, were men. The wives of these men were also targeted. This was reflected in a title page of a book on witchcraft where the representation was not of a poor woman but one 'dressed as a lady, wealthy and powerful' (Behringer 2004: 95). In the Rhine-Moselle region of Germany, in areas affected by the sharp increase in cold weather, 'unusual numbers of elite figures were accused, and these often being the wives of village office-holders and wealthy peasants' (Briggs 2013).

Thus, changes in business practices of a capitalist or proto-capitalist nature, making profit rather than meeting community needs, led to reactions. Those who profited or became rich were targeted as witches in a manner of levelling. But levelling tendencies also worked with regard to people within the community who were just somewhat better off and not really capitalists or even traders maximizing profits. Here it was not a matter of opposing accumulation but a form of jealousy within communities that had been relatively egalitarian.

Restricting accumulation: attacking one who accumulates but does not share

In a market economy, the reward for undertaking risks in trying something new is the higher income it may provide. But the risk of acquiring wealth is that of being denounced as a witch, which is likely to be a big disincentive for individual or household-based efforts to increase productivity. Those who acquire seemingly unexplained wealth are the likely targets of witch persecutions. But in some indigenous communities, such as the Lisu of Thailand, who are also in Yunnan, China, there is no witch-related disincentive to acquiring wealth (Durrenberger 1993). The Lisu accept that 'wealth is the result of individual productivity' (ibid.: 60) and 'sharp dealing is valued and contributes to one's reputation' (ibid.: 59). But wealth needs to be accompanied or followed by generosity, which is the basis of power and prestige.

In New Guinea, Marshall Sahlins pointed out that ability to amass wealth makes a great man (1963); women, of course, could not accumulate wealth.

Maurice Godelier makes the same point about the Baruya (1986), and Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern point out about New Guinea in general: 'Wealth in New Guinea is frequently seen by people as a means of attaining a sense of self-worth or equality with others' (2004). But among the New Guinea communities too, acquiring wealth needed to be accompanied or followed up by 'redistributing [it] with astutely calculated generosity' (Godelier 1986: 163). This is a contradictory movement—acquiring wealth and also redistributing it, the coercive side of the gift economy (Stewart and Strathern 2004: 115). It is not the acquisition of wealth but greed, presumably in excess consumption, that is the 'basic idea surrounding the idea of witchcraft' (ibid.: 119).

A study of central Malawi points out that there too accumulation is not 'the core of moral arguments and anxieties' (Englund 1996: 267). '... accumulation is endowed with moral adequacy as long as the enterprising person makes his or her constitutive relationships visible, usually through gift-giving, patronage or feasting' (ibid.: 260). Among the Bakweri (east Cameroon), patrilineal relatives are said to suffer from *inona*, or envy (Ardener 1970: 145). Among the Dedza of central Malawi, the poor exhibit some form of envy, or jealousy, as they target the 'greedy rich' (Englund 1996: 272). Being characterized as both 'very poor' or 'very rich' can increase the chances of being charged as a witch in Tanzania (M. Green 2005: 252).

Thus, in some cases, there is not a stigmatization of wealth acquisition, but such wealth has to be accompanied by generosity, or it can lead to witch accusation and persecution. Thus, it is a constrained agency of the individual, where agency is accepted but has to result in redistribution through generosity. In this way, it bears a similarity to Francis Nyamnjoh's *domesticated agency*:

> ... the freedom to pursue individual or group goals exists within a socially pre-determined framework that emphasizes conviviality with collective interests while simultaneously allowing for individual creativity and self-fulfillment ... success or achievement counts for very little unless it also includes one's extended family. Focusing merely on immediate family (parents and siblings) is insufficient. (2001: 31, 39)

Who all are part of family is something that has kept changing over time. In a situation of economic uncertainty and widespread destitution, it is understandable that there is a call for extending or retaining the circle of entitlements that existed in the subsistence economy of the village. But one cannot ignore the point that there is a contradiction between an extended circle of entitled persons and individual savings or family advancement.

We remember an instance where an artist, Reitu Ram, was fashioning an iron replica of the *anga* (the witch-finding instrument seen in the cover

illustration) in Bastar, India. He was paid about four times the prevailing daily wage rate at that time. During this period, a large number of relatives turned up to stay with him, though they could have continued to get employment at the prevailing daily wage rate. They left when that relatively high-wage work was over. Such a social security system may work well where the chances of better employment keep shifting from one person to another. But where the chances of better employment are concentrated on one or a few persons who have marketable skills, it could well lead to resentment at the number of persons who have to be supported at a bare survival level, while she herself is not able to put her children through school. If the consumption return were the same as with low-wage employment, there would be less of an incentive to acquire a skill that would provide higher wage employment. In an economy where all do not have equal access to better income opportunities, would it not be preferable for the state, and not the family, to be required to provide social security or a minimum income? This would be preferable to a situation where those who do not share their higher income with this wide circle are denounced as witches.

Of course, there needs to be a minimum requirement to support, say, one's parents and children, as is now the law in China and in Bihar, India. This will prevent the kind of situation reported by Dalel Benbabaali in Telangana, India, where the family of an indigenous person, a mechanical engineer, 'alienated them from other Koyas who disapprove of the way the paper factory employee left his widowed mother, now 80 years old, to live a miserable life in a hut just next to his house' (2018: 127).

Accounts from Africa point to the fear of those who have been government or private-sector employees on returning to their villages after retirement. There is a fear of resentment leading to witch charges if the returnees were to build better houses, and so on (Ntloedibe-Kuswani 2007). The result is a loss to the rural economy as savings are accumulated not in the rural economy but in urban centres. It would be preferable to have retirees' savings accumulated in the rural economy without the threat of being denounced as witches. Of course, this has to be supported by state-provided social security so that people look beyond the family for minimal consumption security.

Promotion of accumulation: witch as the one who asks

Another type of relationship is where the witches are supposed to be those who do not do so well and have made demands on or bring misfortune to those who have become better off. In our case studies, there are cases in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan, India. These cases were not among the Bhil, an

indigenous people, among whom there were many cases of witch persecutions (Sakaria 1997). Rather, the cases were between castes tied together in patron–service relations, termed *jajmani* relations. Women of the marginalized, low-status service castes were denounced as witches when they asked for their normal dues under the moral economy of the *jajmani* system. An example is the case of Meena of Rajasthan of the Doli caste (drummers) who performed at her patron's, an upper caste household, wedding. But when she went to ask for the usual remuneration, they threw her out, saying, 'How dare you ask for payment? You are a witch. Since you came, my child has been sick.'

Robin Briggs distinguishes this type of witch accusation in England as being against the 'neighbour who asks' (Briggs 1996: 140). It has also been called the charity refused model by Keith Thomas (1971). The denunciation of the 'neighbour who asks' or the woman who asks for her dues is a renunciation of the assistance that 'medieval social and religious theory demanded' (Levack 2006: 159). In the case of the witch as the 'one who asks', the accused witches would be poorer than their accusers. In the analysis of witch hunts, this was pointed out in the case of Essex, England, where 'witches seem to have been poorer than their victims' (Macfarlane 1970: 150). The denunciation of the 'neighbour who asks' or the woman who asks for her dues under the hierarchy of caste system—these are attempts to change an existing moral economy of sharing and replace it with a market-based moral economy, where earnings remain with those who earn it. This was the disintegration of the community-based service-and-payment of village society seen also by Keith Thomas as a factor in witch hunting in England. These reciprocal relations were obviously unequal, but even then these involved some payments in kind or cash to the poor. In the pursuit of accumulation, the village elite sought to end those obligations that 'medieval social and religious theory demanded'. In India, it is a matter of the upper castes denying obligations that were part of the caste-based service system.

Neighbourliness was what Peter Geschiere (2013) termed intimacy, which could range from neighbourliness in villages in early modern Europe to kinship in indigenous societies around the globe. All such relations have certain norms of what are and what are not acceptable forms of behaviour. But when norms are changing, some members of the village may act according to one new set of norms which is unacceptable behaviour according to another, the prevailing or traditional norms of behaviour. This then leads to a break in trust that formerly characterized relations where both parties acted according to the same accepted set of traditional norms.

One story well illustrates the clash between sets of norms and the ensuing witchcraft accusation against a person who asks for the continuation of the older norms.

> George le Remendeur testified against Barbelline Chaperey, telling how some nine years before she had been getting milk from his wife for her child; at this point his father added three cows to the three he already had and he decided to seek a larger profit by using his milk otherwise. He told his wife to stop selling milk; so the next day she warned Barbelline of this—yet she came back again the next day and when refused asked if she had not paid before, at which his wife agreed she had. The same evening his best cow stopped giving milk and subsequently died. When the local executioner was called in to cut it up and see what it had died of, he found its organs all burned, while most of the flesh was black, so he told George it was 'true witchcraft'; he subsequently lost all his cows and four oxen, over which he suspected her. (Briggs 1998: 150)

There is a number of points of interest in the above account of a witchcraft accusation event. First is that there is a replacement of women by men when trading goes on to become a regular and the main purpose of the activity. Dairying was women's domain, including the sale of milk, when it was a household consumption activity. But when this moves to being a commercial activity, men take it over, as did George when he told his wife to stop selling the milk.

The second point is that in a peasant economy there are norms regarding the exchange or sale of milk. Clearly the milk had been sold to Barbelline, possibly at some customary price. In order to increase, if not maximize, profit from his investment in more cattle, George needed to sell the milk on the market, getting the prevailing market price and not sell at some conventionally fixed price. So, it is the shift from the traditional exchange of milk at conventionally determined prices to commercial sale on the market that could be seen as the structural transformation leading to a loss of trust among formerly good neighbours.

The third point is that there is a change from complex or multi-stranded relationships in the neighbourhood to single-stranded relationships in the market (Briggs 1998: 149ff.). Neighbours in villages shared many things, including tools, labour, and products, such as milk in this case; the parties relate to each other at many levels. Relations in the market can be one of buying and selling. Of course, market relationships can also become more complex, with repeated transactions leading to expectations on both sides. However, there is no necessity for many market relations to be of this type; they may just be a matter of arms' length sales.

The fourth and most important difference from the conventional set of norms is that market transaction recognizes and allows the search for maximum profits. Neighbourhood relationships, on the other hand, are based on necessity and forms of reciprocity. This may work well in casual and

irregular trade but could break down when trade intensifies and exchange becomes the way to realize profit.

The above example is what was in Thomas' analysis (1971) the charity refused model. This is not charity but the woman asks for what used to be her due in the old, traditional relationships, but where she is turned away. After she goes away, perhaps, mumbling curses, some misfortune strikes the family that turned her away. She is blamed for that misfortune and denounced as a witch. This is an instance of the better-off who, having invested in new types of production, wish to get rid of the fetters of older norms of neighbourhood relationships in their search for profit in the new method of commercial production.

Competition over resources

If the study of Essex led to the charity refused model, the study of Kent, also in England, led Malcolm Gaskill to put forward the theory of competition over resources (2000). In this model, the conflict was not between unequals as the rich and poor but between persons and families relatively equal in status. Of course, as with other witchcraft systems, such competition leading to witch accusations was not restricted to England.

In her study of Germany, Rita Volmer points out that 'members of witch-finding committees used their power to target local rivals, territorial lords used witch-trials to assert their claims, while individuals used the opportunities offered by the persecution to advance themselves socially and financially' (Volmer 2009). This was a clear instrumentalization of witch hunts, using the idea of witchcraft damage. This was also pointed out for both England and New England in the United States, with persecutions taking place for 'poor practices' that included economic aggression and advancing one's self-interest (Kent 2006).

Capturing women's land and property as an instrument of accumulation

Yet another type of witch persecution is observed in Jharkhand, India, where it was noted to be used to deprive widows and other unsupported women of their rights in land (Kelkar and Nathan 1991). In this relationship, the witch persecution becomes an instrument of accumulation, the takeover of lands of weak and defenceless women by powerful male relatives on the husbands' side. In subsequent case studies in Indian states, the seizure of land of weak women was the feature of 38 per cent or 42 out of 110 cases. This was not

just a seizure of someone's property but also an attempt to implement the patrilineal transmission of property.

But some instances of seizure of land were not by male relatives but by others. For instance, in the case of Matia Devi of Jharkhand, it was some brokers, or middlemen, who were trying to seize her land and got her denounced as a witch. In the case of Saraswathi of Mayurbanjh, Odisha, it was the village head who seized her land. With Kudiya of Chhattisgarh, the villagers, who were relatives on her husband's side, had taken her land and driven her out. The late Phibi Devi and her late husband, Vijay Oraon, were victims of witch incident and killing. They belonged to the priest community and used to perform all the priestly functions in the village. The villagers accused Phibi Devi of being a *dayaan*, and they wanted them to stop performing the priestly functions. The reason attributed is that they had a lot of land to their ownership because they belonged to the priest community. The villagers wanted to snatch their land, and in the process killed her. In Europe, particularly vulnerable were single women who inherited land and thus disrupted the patrilineal transmission of property (Levack 2006; Godbeer 2013).

Dispossession: turning peasants into wage labourers and women into reproducers

Seizing land is also a way of turning peasants into labourers, taking away their land and forcing them to seek wage employment. A number of studies of Africa have pointed out that the property of alleged witches was confiscated, pushing them into 'the anonymity of the urban compounds' (Hinfelaar 2007: 231). This analysis of Malawi also says that this dispossession has been undertaken in a systematic manner in areas 'earmarked for game management and game ranching, for tourism and for occupation by potential big landowners' (Hinfelaar 2007: 237). This is a form of enclosure through which large areas of land become available for large-scale enterprises, with the former landowning peasants being turned into landless labourers, forced to seek wage employment.

Dispossession, which turns peasants into wage labourers, is a key aspect of what Marx termed the 'primitive accumulation of capital', which we rephrase as the primary accumulation of capital, overcoming the negative connotations of primitive. The primary accumulation of capital simultaneously centralizes wealth and creates a class of property-less workers, who have to turn to wage employment as a means of earning a living. Such primary accumulation is carried out not only by private capitalists but also by the state whether in colonial or post-colonial India or Africa. This primary accumulation of capital

and resistance to this process, resistance often leading to witch accusations, is a factor of capitalist transformation.

At the same time in India and Africa, the history of transition to a market-based capitalist economy predates the post-colonial development plans. Unlike in early modern Europe, however, this transition to a capitalist market economy was undertaken under colonial aegis, rather than as a result of domestic promptings. An impact of this remote-controlled transformation seems to have been the strengthening or reincarnation of phantasmagoric images of capitalist exploitation. The zombie figures of Africa, the corpse that is washed up covered with cowrie shells signalling the accumulation of wealth, the capitalist owner as devil in South America—all such metaphors emphasize the alienating nature of labour under capitalism. The worker seems to get nothing, while the capitalist gets everything, all the value; the worker is kept alive just to further capital accumulation. The re-imagination of what may have been indigenous beliefs (the zombie in Africa) or of beliefs introduced by the colonists (the Christian devil in South America) show what we would identify as the re-articulation of indigenous cosmologies with capitalist alienation.

Witch hunts and phases of economic transformation

Witch persecution is related to the structural transformation from subsistence to an accumulative economy in three ways. It can promote and facilitate accumulation, through grabbing the land and property of women who are denounced as witches. Witch hunts can also promote accumulation by denouncing as witches those who try to follow the principles of the traditional model economy of the community. At the same time, witch persecution can also be disruptive of accumulation by targeting the economically well-off in the community. In India, Africa, and Europe, all three forms of interaction have been seen.

In the analysis above, witch accusations have been linked to the structural transformation to accumulative economies and the corresponding switch from one form of moral economy, stressing redistribution, to another form of moral economy, stressing individual accumulation. Do these accusations vary in their incidence depending on the extent to which this transformation has occurred, more where the conflict between the two moral economies is most intense and less both where the old moral economy holds full sway and where the new moral economy also holds sway?

An interesting account (Ardener 1970) of the incidence of witch accusations among the Bakweri of Cameroon brings out this contrast between witch accusations in different forms of organizing accumulation. Initially, the

growth of the banana plantation economy was understood to have led to a new and virulent form of witchcraft, called *nyongo*: '*Nyongo* people could best be recognized by their tin houses which they had been able to build with the zombie labour of their dead relatives ... By 1953 the belief had taken such hold that no one would build a modern house for fear of being accused of possessing *nyongo*' (Ardener 1970: 147).

This began to change in 1954 when the Bakweri took up cooperative farming of bananas. With cooperative export, there was a substantial and broadly spread distribution of the income from the banana boom. When so many, possibly all households, could undertake house improvements, these improvements were no longer taken as signs of *nyongo*. In fact, the community went further and got rid of or exorcized *nyongo* from Bakweri land.

What role did the broad-based participation in the commercial banana economy and the widespread of benefits from the banana boom, rather than being restricted to a handful of persons or households, have to play in this removal of the tyranny of *nyongo*-based actions? At a broad level, one can say that the general acceptance of commercial banana cultivation and the cooperative-based wide distribution of benefits changed the earlier opposition to the individualized moral economy of commercialization and with this, action based on witchcraft beliefs were brought under control. The earlier identification of the commercial economy with destruction gave way to acceptance of the commercial as they undertook '... communal betterment through cooperative exporting' (Ardener 1970: 153). The link between types of accumulation, narrow or broad, and differences in actions based on witchcraft beliefs, changing from widespread to virtually no actions, is an important connection.

When the benefits of commercial economy are accessed by only a handful, there is a conflict between old, communitarian norms and new, individualist, accumulative norms. An interesting study of Sierra Leone goes into the link between witch beliefs and conflicts between these two sets of norms. Huib van de Grijspaarde et al. (2012) surveyed 2,443 household heads from 182 villages in the Gola Forest region of eastern Sierra Leone. The villages were divided into three types—first, where communitarian or, in the term the authors prefer, patrimonial relations are strong; second, where market forces are well established; and, third, where communities experience conflict between communitarian and market forces. They found that witch accusations were most in the third type of villages, where there was conflict between communitarian and market forces, and were low or virtually non-existent in the first and second type of villages, where communitarian or patrimonial rules prevailed in the first and market rules prevailed in the second.

'Where only one set of rules prevails—it does not matter which—then the system is untroubled by witches. Witchcraft emerges in zones where institutional flux is highest and value systems compete. The witch is the product of normative ambiguity' (van de Grijspaarde et al. 2012: 46).

These three types of villages are also related to change in agricultural production, away from dry subsistence production to production for the market, with swamp rice or wet rice production. When there is a trend towards greater swamp rice cultivation, the level of witchcraft accusations rises. As the authors point out, this is likely because there are no clear rules on how swamp rice land is to be allocated and how the returns are to be shared. But as swamp farming becomes dominant, these rules are sorted out. There is a shift from governance based on patrimonial rules to market governance based on rents and income from crop sales. So, the transformation of witchcraft beliefs into witch accusations varied with the extent of conflict over norms, including over the norms of patriarchal control, as we see in non-indigenous communities of India.

Witch Hunts in Development

Policy and Practice

9

In this chapter we look in more detail at the manner in which witch accusations were linked with the development policy of capitalist systems in some countries. Witch hunting could be governmental development or judicial policy. Some of them were market-based developments in rural areas. Others were new forms of witch accusations that appeared with urbanization, while new metaphors were developed for large-scale capitalist enterprises in mines and plantations. The geographic areas covered are countries in Africa, the Americas, and the Pacific.

Witch hunts in anti-colonial uprisings in Africa

European colonial states in Africa generally made illegal the persecution of alleged witches. The laws did not make beliefs in witchcraft illegal but made actions based on those beliefs illegal (Redding 2019: 5–6). Colonial states were then seen as the protectors of witches. In opposition to this, during some anti-colonial movements, 'cleansing' of the concerned African societies from witchcraft practices was part of these movements. The 1904–6 Maji Maji uprising in Tanzania included witch hunts (Larson 2014 and Redding 2019). In Kenya, faced with the challenge of movements based on 'spiritual oaths', the colonial state too utilized the witchcraft complex, recruiting witch finders in Kenya to find those who had taken the Mau Mau oath (Luongo 2006). We have not gone into the pre-colonial witch history in South Africa, as in the Zulu kingdom, where there was a classic *orientalist creation* of a non-existent witch massacre (Pels 1998). Nevertheless, the contemporary history of witch hunts in South Africa does make it predominantly a matter of women as supposed witches, a history that could well go back into the pre-colonial period.

The end of colonialism from the 1950s provided an opportunity for some of the newly independent African states to take up anti-witchcraft programmes. Cyprian Fisiy and Peter Geschiere report a Cameroonian friend saying,

> But with decolonization all this is going to change. You white people think witchcraft does not exist. But now Africans hold the positions of authority and they know witchcraft is all too real here. Soon the law will be changed, so that judges will be able to deal with witches. (1990: 136)

Not all African countries have changed the colonial laws, which make anti-witch actions a crime. South Africa, for instance, still has the colonial era law.

Social accusations of women as witches

In a number of African countries, beliefs centred on women as witches. Men too were supposed to be witches, but to a much less important and lesser extent.

In one of the earliest attempts to look at gender issues in witchcraft, Siegfried Nadel (1952) pointed out that among the Nupe in Nigeria witches are always women. The witch finders and village cleansers of witches are, on the other hand, always men. Nadel finds this related to Nupe women's stronger economic position as itinerant traders compared to their peasant husbands. Among the neighbouring Gwari, witches are both women and men. Among the two warrior-herder societies of Korongo and Mesakin in central Sudan, the Korongo have no notion of witches, something that is often the case with gatherer-hunter societies. The Mesakin are 'literally obsessed by fears of witchcraft' (Nadel 1952: 23), and these are related to inheritance conflicts among men. But there is one curious feature of witch actions among the Mesakin—anger may be vented 'almost at random' (ibid.: 26). This is similar to what Clayton Robarchek and Carole Robarcheck point out for the Warorani of Central America, where anger is vented almost at random, and anyone may be killed as a witch (2005).

Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, women in general have two sides: 'The official ideology of seductive beauty and fertility upholds the virtues of sexual reproduction; the hidden, subversive dimensions of witchcraft, however, is believed to cause death, disease and infertility' (Apter 1993: 222). The fertility goddess, Yemoja, is also the 'Mother of all witches'. So, a woman, also the Mother Goddess, is both creative and destructive. It could happen that the destructive side of a Yoruba woman, the witch, takes over and becomes the dominant aspect of a woman; there can be a passing from one aspect to the other. She has to be placated as a mother but kept under control as a potential witch. In any case, men are not witches.

Writing about pre-colonial Ashanti, T. C. McCaskie points out that witches were said to conceal poisonous snakes in their vaginas (1981). The Fon people in Benin see women as having a more immediate relationship with *aze* (the witch substance) than men (Kahn 2014: 12). There is no mention of men being witches among the Akan. However, the Ndembu of Zambia acknowledge both women and men as evil witches or sorcerers. The difference between the two is that women inherit their evil powers, in the sense that they are chosen by the familiars of a dead witch as their new owner, while envy or ambition makes men evil (Turner [1968]1981: 15). Similarly, for the Batswana of Botswana, both women and men could be witches (Ntloedibe-Kuswani 2007). In Tanzania, the Balwaya believe both women and men can be witches, though it is mainly women because 'women are more envious or jealous than men' (Nyaga 2007: 257).

Among the Maka of Cameroon, both women and men can be witches, but there has been a low number of women. Of the 38 accused reported by Fisiy and Geschiere (1990: 139), 6, or less than 15 per cent, were women. At the same time, the Maka do point to women as the first witches, with the saying, 'Women were the first to leave their bodies' (ibid.). A woman was the first to know of *djambe*, the witch substance, which entered her body. Later, the *djambe* is said to have spread among men too. Women, however, are the original sinner, as with the Biblical Eve.

In Gonja, northern Ghana, it was agreed that both women and men might obtain witchcraft powers. But only women, particularly old women, are evil. Men's witchcraft is not evil. In Esther Goody's study, 95 per cent of the cases where action was taken against witchcraft concerned women. To her question about 'Why are witches women?', one Gonja woman replied, 'Because we are evil' (1970: 240). Goody, however, sees that 'women cannot be permitted to act aggressively without endangering the dominance of men ...' (ibid.: 242).

In more contemporary studies, Catherine Dolan (2002) finds that among export contract farmers in Meru district, Kenya, there is a change in the gender composition of witches. Men are associated with witchcraft in disputes between households, while women are associated with witchcraft in intra-household conflicts between women and men. At dispute in the latter case is often the distribution of income from export production.

Older women in Soweto are said to be the persons who carry on witchcraft or the use of mysterious substances, *muti*. If, as seen earlier, witch persecutions are related to a general jealousy, then why are men not supposed to take up witchcraft? For one, women, particularly older women, 'predominate in the ranks of healers and prophets, adepts in the use of mysterious substances' (Ashforth 2005: 75) and thus most liable to become witches. Jealousy among men or other conflicts result in physical violence, while conflicts among or

with women are supposed to result in the use of witchcraft. Why not older men as witches? As one of Adam Ashforth's respondents told him, 'No, those ones are useless. They are too busy drinking. They don't care' (ibid.).

In Soweto, 'on the occasion—rare occasions—when collective action is taken against the perpetrators of witchcraft, it usually takes the form of violence committed by young men against older women' (ibid.: 76). The large number of attacks on women as supposed witches in democratic South Africa has prompted much discussion and soul searching. The Ralushai Commission (1998) put out its report on witchcraft, arguing for the recognition of witchcraft beliefs as an African system of analysis. The Commission on Gender Equality also went into the question and issued the *Thohoyandou Declaration on Ending Witchcraft Violence*, starting with the centrality of 'the right of all men and women to live without fear of threat to their lives' (Commission on Gender Equality [South Africa] 1998, in Ashforth 2005: 326).

The political economy of women's challenges to patriarchal structures

Many of the above examples are in the context of changes in economic structures and related challenges to patriarchal gender relations. Basically, there is an increase in market-related economic opportunities, as against the older subsistence agriculture. The increase in market-related economic opportunities, however, is not confined to just a handful, the elite. The market opportunities for petty trading usually involve all or many households. 'Virtually the whole adult population is involved in petty trading' among the Dedza in central Malawi (Englund 1996: 261). In this, there would be class differences, with some differential ability to mobilize capital or in other ways utilize market opportunities. Importantly, there would also be gender differences, often based on earlier gender divisions of labour. It is the gender-differentiated access to market opportunities and the tensions they cause in intra-household gender relations that are of interest over here. In the various domains of patriarchy, what we are looking at is the economic domain and its impact on household decision-making. This, however, is an argument within the sphere of market relations or modernization, and not against modernization in the manner of the Comaroffs' characterization of witchcraft, as pointed out by Harri Englund (1996) in an analysis of central Malawi.

For the Mamprusi of west Cameroon, Susan Drucker-Brown (1993) carried out a detailed analysis of the change in economic activities of women and men. Traditionally, men, through their control of agriculture, provided

the cereal for porridge, and women provided the materials for the soup of leaves collected from the forest. Men also controlled the household animals, which were a form of saving. Along with providing cereal for porridge, men paid women for kola nuts and beer. Modernization brought new needs, to satisfy which required cash. Women were the persons who undertook trade and thus accumulated savings. As against women's savings, an economic crisis in the mid-1980s led to the loss of men's savings in animals, making the households dependent on women's cash acquired from petty trading for meeting household requirements.

Since then, many bush products have been commercialized, increasing cash possibilities for women. Simultaneously, men faced increased competition in their spheres, such as farming and educated employment. Men have also faced a reduction in supply from bush animals, which they used to hunt and sell. All this resulted in women providing the main cereal for household consumption: 'For women to provide cereal crops to make the daily porridge is an indication that men are failing to meet their basic domestic commitment and is a sign of economic crisis' (Drucker-Brown 1993: 541).

In this situation, witchcraft discussions centre around the need for cash and women's control of accumulation of cash from trading. Women are expected to be docile and submissive, but their increased economic role seems to have increased their assertiveness, or what Drucker-Brown calls 'aggressiveness', resulting in women being accused of being witches. It is not only vulnerable women who are attacked but also those who are 'outstanding in some way' (1993: 546). In one way or the other, it is the agency that women acquired through their increased economic role that lies behind the witch accusations. Drucker-Brown makes the important point that the belief in the increased incidence of witch accusations is related to the 'loss of control of Mamprusi men over their economic and political environment' (ibid.: 547).

Did men's loss of control over the economic and political environment lead to the witch camps in northern Ghana, with the infamous Gambaga, in the region of the Mamprusi? Women became increasingly autonomous as their trading activities became central to the rural economy, while men lost control of the local economy. All this, the men say, has led to an increased frequency and virulence of witch attacks by women. Men losing confidence in their own ability to counter the women 'witches' has led to new techniques of dealing with witches through banishing them to the witch camps. Furthermore, because of the gender conflict of economic roles in the rural economy—the witch conflict too is one within the community—Mamprusi women were placed in the camps, rather than peoples from other regions. This is a gendered struggle for control over the local, rural economy.

There was also a change in the narrative of witchcraft. While earlier witches were said to eat their victims, 'witches are now seen as trapping, storing and eventually selling them for money' (Drucker-Brown 1993: 540). The story in a way continues the earlier narrative of the slave trade now transformed into that of herds of livestock being taken to market.

The witchcraft narrative has changed to be more in consonance with accumulation rather than dis-accumulation. Of course, the accumulative process is fostered with the dispossession of the accused women and their being turned into a labour reserve mainly for the local market in Gambaga. Dzodzi Tsikata, of the University of Ghana, holds that older women were targeted as they were no longer useful as child bearers. 'When women are bearing children and being dutiful wives, they conform to what society requires. But once they become menopausal, they become marginalized' (quoted in Kati Whitaker 2012). ActionAid campaigns (ActionAid 2012) on the human rights of the mainly old women at the witch camps have attracted international attention and forced some action by the state in Ghana.

A contemporary account of change in economic gender roles is Christine Dolan's analysis of cultivation of fresh vegetables for export in the Meru district of Kenya (2002). Cultivation of export vegetables has given women more of an economic role. Though women perform a much higher share of labour, men control the income from agriculture. Unlike in parts of West Africa where there are systems of separate budgets for women and men, in Kenya household income is supposed to be collectively used for the household. This would require that women behave according to cultural prescriptions and hand over money to men. But, in practice, women are 'careful to shield their earnings from their spouses lest they be compelled to pay for school fees, medical expenses or for household items that are normatively their husband's responsibility' (Dolan 2002: 671). The men, as one woman said, '... find it not useful to bring home the money, but instead spend it in towns with young beautiful ladies' (ibid.: 674). When one of the authors was in the Mount Kenya region, we were told by a strawberry grower that she did not want to see her husband bringing home another woman on a bicycle she had bought for him!

Struggles over control of household income have been met with increased domestic violence by men and witchcraft allegations: 'By invoking the potential of witchcraft (whether or not it is actualized) women are defying the patriarchal bargain, breaking the normative rules regulating gender relations and the explicit code of behavior expected of a "good wife"' (ibid.). In sum, it is struggles over control of household income and over norms of women's behaviour that underlie the rumours of witchcraft use by women. As Dolan points out, several women have challenged the patriarchal norms: 'witchcraft

(whether it is simply a threat or it is carried out) can have a strong appeal' (ibid.: 677). Here, it should be pointed out that the reference to witchcraft is to the use of herbs and other such substances that may have psychological effects, not the supposed use of supernatural powers. Women might well be playing on men's fears of witchcraft by claiming to have such powers.

Similarly, in an analysis of the gender consequences of changing economic relations, Englund points out, with regard to the Dedza of central Malawi, that women who own beer shops keep the money from selling beer: 'This has contributed to a stereotypical view among some men that women secretly command an enormous wealth because of their beer business' (1996: 268). The other such example of changing household economic relations is given in Goody (1970) and Nadel (1952). Among the Nupe, women as itinerant traders are economically stronger than their farmer husbands (Nadel 1952), and as a consequence, witches are exclusively women. Overall, there is a threat to men's status as household head, as pointed out by Achille Mbembe (2006). This challenge to patriarchy in many African countries lies at the base of witch accusations.

Witch hunts as state development programme: Benin

State actions can be of two types. First is that of programmes implemented by the government. Second is that of judicial action based on the anti-witchcraft laws put into place. Of course, the first, or governmental action, also requires a base in laws, but these programmes go beyond the prosecution of individual cases to fairly widespread actions against large numbers of accused witches, almost entirely women. We take up the governmental anti-witchcraft programme in Benin and then go on to cases in Cameroon and Malawi.

The Marxist-Leninist regime of Benin launched a development programme in the mid-1970s. This development programme had three components[1]—an agricultural production campaign, an anti-feudalism campaign, and an anti-witchcraft campaign. The anti-witchcraft campaign was expected to liberate the peasants from the depredations of witches and thus increase agricultural production: 'Unlike anti-superstition campaigns elsewhere, for example in China, the rhetoric of the Beninese campaigns never construed witches as the delusions of ignorant peasants; the deadly practices of witch others were regarded as actual challenges to state sovereignty' (Kahn 2014: 9). In a way, this was also the doctrine in the Cameroon, where too the struggle over sorcery was said to be 'at the heart of the process of state formation' (Rowlands and Warnier 1988, quoted in Fisiy and Geschiere 1990: 148).

[1] This account is based on Kahn (2014), Elwert (1984), and Strandsberg (2000).

The witchcraft beliefs of the Fon people in Benin are said to be similar to those of Gbe- and Yoruba-speaking people. Women were said to have a close relationship to the witchcraft substance, *aze*, due to both conflicts among co-wives in polygynous households and women's greater involvement in market activities. But women were considered by nature witches, since the Fon believed the vagina to be pure *aze* (the witchcraft substance), making women both vulnerable and powerful. These were *les forces du mal* (the forces of evil) from whom peasants had to be liberated.

The regime formed Local Revolutionary Councils (LRCs) as all-in-one bodies to investigate, judge, and sentence individuals. The process depended critically on publicly acquired confessions, acquired through torture:

> ... some of the accused women [were put] in the middle of a fire circle, place a heavy stone on the belly of those who were pregnant, leave other 'witches' standing upright for days in the sun at noon, or just ask someone who served in the colonial army to beat them 'according to military standards'. (Elwert 1984: 291)

The LRCs sometimes devolved their powers to the witch finders, the *vodun* priests.

The condemned witches were then paraded, with a cheering crowd of onlookers pelting them with stones and taken to the 'house of witchcraft' next to the police station. The witch persons (*azexewe*) were populated by childless elderly widowed women (Kahn 2014). These women were put to work in prison gangs or on state farms.

Though elderly widows were the main target, the torture and imprisonment obviously would have had an inhibiting effect on any women who might have thought of transgressing accepted gender norms. The threat of being declared a witch, with all its consequences of torture to extract a confession, social ostracism, and imprisonment, would have been a powerful deterrent to any norm-breaking behaviour.

Development programmes in other countries of Africa

Benin was not the only 'socialist' regime to carry out witch hunts. Such efforts were carried out in building *ujamaa* socialism in Tanzania. Of course, the witch hunts in Tanzania were nowhere the brutal spectacle of the Benin witch hunts, but the state did sanction so-called witch cleansing, which were forms of witch hunting. As pointed out earlier, the well-known Maji Maji rebellion against German colonialism in 1905–7 itself had a witch hunting component, and this continued into the *ujamaa* development efforts. Nyerere is reported to have said that witchcraft was the biggest influence on the lives

of Africans even in urban areas (Burton 2017: 383). However, rather than trying to counter the influence of witchcraft beliefs, the regime in Tanzania sought to carry out witch cleansings.

The Tanzanian state did not sanction witch killings, and the local governments and police tried to prevent witches from being killed by mobs (Nyaga 2007). But the point is that by making witchcraft a normative part of the development discourse, the state was supporting the creation of an atmosphere in which witch persecution and killings could take place: 'Witchcraft suppression practices play an important role in contributing to the entrenchment of witchcraft and establishing its normativity' (M. Green 2005: 249). The net result of the reinforcement of these beliefs was that 'murders of supposed witches (as well as of persons born with albinism) continue on an almost daily basis' (Burton 2017: 365). Those individuals who did better and 'unduly profited' from their business were accused of practising witchcraft, while those who practised according to 'our customs', which probably means redistributing some part of their profits, did not face such accusations (ibid.: 384).

During the period of *ujamaa* development, a village that did well because of its well-functioning cooperative aroused suspicion of using witchcraft to do better than other villages. The chairman of the village was accused of witchcraft practices. Another village that also did well was thought by its neighbours to be 'entirely populated by witches' (ibid.: 385).

Witchcraft trials and the role of the judiciary in Cameroon have been discussed in Fisiy (1998), Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (1998), and Fisiy and Geschiere (1990). The statement that with decolonization things would change and judges would be able to deal with witches has been mentioned earlier. The Cameroon government commissioned a study in 1985 to find out whether witchcraft was a hindrance to development. They found that migrants to urban areas were scared to go back to the village, as they were likely to 'being eaten', meaning having to share their savings with those back in the village. Furthermore, government employees posted outside their home areas were threatened by witches. Thus, witchcraft acted as a levelling mechanism.

Migrants were thought to use a new form of witchcraft, *n'yongo*, in which victims were not 'eaten' but put to work as *zombies*, to work and enrich the witches. Thus, enrichment was thought to be the result of the use of supernatural or occult means of employing the living dead or zombies. As said to be in the case of Masama, whose mother and cousin had died mysteriously, '... the diviner's [witch finder's] findings revealed that Masama's mother was splitting wood while his uncle's daughter fried and sold puff-puff balls,

and picked coffee in that invisible world, all toward Masama's enrichment' (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998: 73–4).

Along with the spread of these new forms of witch accusations, there were new forms of witch persecutions. This included different types of lynching and the gruesome 'necklacing', where a burning tyre was placed on a person, usually a woman's neck. One does not know whether 'necklacing' originated in Cameroon or spread from South Africa, where it seems to have been the favoured killing system by comrades, including towards and after the end of Apartheid. As with de-colonization elsewhere, the end of Atpartheid seems to have brought an increase of witch accusations and persecutions.

In Cameroon, witch accusations were brought under the purview of law and trials followed. But procedures seem very much based on the witchcraft beliefs and the use of witch doctors as witnesses. In the judicial process, the human rights of the accused were violated. Fisiy points out, 'The feeling one gets when reading witchcraft files is that alleged witches are treated as if they do not possess any civil or human rights; they are part of a dark force subverting the very existence of the state' (1998: 155).

The judicial process involved using witch doctors or what we would call witch finders as expert evidence. This was more so in the eastern part of Cameroon, which had a French colonial history and tended to incorporate traditional systems into state processes, as against the British part of Cameroon, which did not carry out such incorporation of traditional systems into state processes. But, as is usual in witch accusations, the accusation itself is tantamount to proof, and 'the judges tend to consult the witch doctor only in order to confirm accusations and not to deny them' (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990: 140). Finally, however, conviction depended on the belief of the judge that witchcraft does exist, as reportedly argued by a judge in eastern Cameroon (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990: 149). Confession was the key part of the so-called evidence in witch trials in Benin too (Falen 2018). The decisive proof is supposed to be that of the witch doctor or witch finder. To put it in other terms: the witch finder is the accuser, and it is his evidence that is crucial to prosecution; accusation itself is tantamount to conviction; all this depends on the 'intimate conviction' of the judge; what remains to be decided is the extent of the sentence—as circular an argument as possible.

Urban transformation in Africa and the Pacific

When participation in the market becomes a general feature of the economy, the witch phenomena may be not a critique of capitalism as such, but a critique of the form of distribution under capitalism in comparison with an earlier economy premised on sharing. This can occur in both rural and

urban contexts. Much of the literature on witch hunts deals largely with a rural context. Small-scale village populations, living together over long periods of time and tied together by kinship and redistributive relations, are the quintessential areas of intimacy affected by witch accusations. But what happens when the same beliefs are carried into urban contexts? Post-Apartheid South Africa is a prime example of a country with witch hunts not only in rural contexts, such as in the Northern Province that was the centre of post-Apartheid witch hunts, but also in sprawling urban centres, such as Soweto, of which there is a very elaborate study by Ashforth (2005).

The rural–urban difference in witch hunts in Africa was first analysed by J. Clyde Mitchell (1965) and Marc Swartz (1982). Mitchell thought that the hostilities and fears that Evans-Pritchard (1976 [1935]) saw as crucial to witchcraft among the Zande would change in the urban context of Salisbury (now Harare) in Zimbabwe. In the town, he thought that tensions intruded from the larger society. In urban areas, competitors are not linked together by familial or kin bonds; they come together on the basis of mutual interest, as against familial/kin bonds of rural areas. Urban relations easily lead to separation. Witchcraft accusations do not need to come into the picture, as happens in rural areas. This could lead to a nil or lower incidence of witch accusations in urban areas.

Along with this, it is also likely that witch accusations get externalized, in the sense that they may not relate to the familial or lineage context but interact with a larger context. Completely unrelated men might compete for jobs, while unrelated women may compete in the market for beer. Neighbours could be from various villages, even if ethnic groups tend to congregate in certain areas. Among the Dezda in the central Malawi economy, virtually the entire adult population participates in the market economy (Englund 1996). In this, however, women keep the money in their own possession, although the money may be used for the household as a whole. This has given rise to the notion that women secretly have accumulated wealth from their beer business. Some of the beer that women brew has to be given for free. Yet there are jealousies against those who have done better, with the 'greedy neighbor' (ibid.: 272) being the neighbour who does not give.

In the analysis of witchcraft in Soweto, Ashforth (2005) shows that there are two kinds of relations at work, even if he does not state it in that manner. On the one hand, 'anyone earning income in Soweto is under strong pressure to share with family members, friends and neighbours' (ibid.: 26). On the other hand, there is also the competition with myriad persons who are neither family nor kin. This takes place in a context of changed aspirations, particularly after the advent of democratic rule in South Africa. However, they have aspirations but not the capacity to realize those aspirations, or the

capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2004). This has led to the spread of jealousy. As Ashforth points out, 'For although virtually everyone endorses such an ideal of motherhood and family, few are in a position to achieve it' (2005: 68); to put it in other words, very few have the capacity to realize their aspirations. This then leads to a spread of jealousy; one might say there is a generalized jealousy. 'Thus, virtually everyone is resentful to some extent of others and their uses of money or has others angry and resentful at them' (ibid.: 33).

Papua New Guinea: from inter-community to within-community witchcraft

While Geschiere (2013) had studied the internal nature of witchcraft, Mary Douglas (1970) had pointed out that witchcraft could be both internal and external. In fact, Papua New Guinea is one region where witchcraft was largely external, between indigenous societies rather than within them. Witchcraft was also part of warfare: 'Baruya shamans are constantly sending their spirits to patrol beyond their tribal frontiers in order to surprise enemies, preferably their shamans, to devour their livers and kill them by means of some or less mysterious and swift illness' (Godelier 1982: 115). This was the pre-colonial situation.

Australian colonialism brought a number of changes in Papua New Guinea. A major step was to put an end to inter-group warfare. Indigenous groups were organized into local administrative areas. There was a growth of commercial cultivation, mainly of coffee, along with an expansion of mining and related activities. These changes brought new forms of witch accusations. Assault on witches replaced warfare as a form of inter-group struggle. Among the Mepa, there was witchcraft associated with the excessive greed of cannibals, where one or two women were said to be cannibal witches in each clan. Among the Duna, there was said to be a danger of outside witch attacks on women and, internally, the growth of women witches with their desire for meat, where they were otherwise deprived of the prized cuts of pork consumed by men.

Furthermore, with the growth of commodity economy, there was the spread of internal witch accusations. This was related to gender conflicts over consumption and the notion of greed and excessive consumption by some people, something that is seen in other places too with the growth of the commercial economy in early modern transformations.

There has then been a conflict between those sticking to the old norms and those wanting to give them up: 'Every accusation I have encountered revolves around the ethos of reciprocity among kin' (Strong 2017: 75). There are witch accusations on both sides. Those in the villages believe that urban

employees and professionals are out to deny villagers their rightful share of income. There have been news reports of employees in the capital city hiding on payday in order to avoid their village relatives. So, urban employees and professionals are witches who are illicitly consuming their income.

On the other side, urban employees think that the villagers with their jealousy are the abode of witches. This is so, as one would expect, also in the nearby island of Vanuatu: 'Well-off Vanuatu residents worry that jealousy ["for other people's possessions; for other people's wealth"] will motivate sorcery attacks on them' (Eriksen and Rio 2017: 187). Or again, in Vanuatu a person who 'sees another ... having success relative and often at the expense of him or herself is expected to engage in sorcery' (Bratrud 2017: 218).

Jealousy is, at least partly, a result of the limited nature of the transformations of the capitalist economy. Aspirations have changed, but not all can realize the new aspirations. As a result, those in urban employment, such as a salaried employee or an airhostess, are branded witches: 'Witches, in short, are already the people that Papua New Guineans would like to become' (Strong 2017: 80).

Witches are also said to eat money, reducing its value (ibid.: 82). This is an interesting analogy, promoting immediate consumption rather than saving or investment. This is rather like the devil metaphor in the Columbian plantations, where extra income, earned through a pact with the devil, could only be consumed in luxury items; if invested, the money would be lost (Taussig 1980).

We should note the transformation of witchcraft with the growing commercial production and political–administrative reorganization. In inter-group conflicts, sorcery is the main means of inter-group conflict, whereas earlier on sorcery and warfare were combined. With warfare now abandoned, sorcery alone remains the basis of inter-group conflict. At present, however, there is the growth of internal group conflicts, with struggles over old norms of reciprocity and new norms of market distribution.

In the internal conflicts, women, not exclusively in all the indigenous groups but in some of them, were identified as the witches. Among the Asaro, the witchcraft substance is supposed to be in the uterus and transmitted as inheritance (Strong 2017: 78). Commercial development, in both colonial and post-colonial situations, has transformed the nature of witchcraft thinking and accusations, but the thinking also has some connection with pre-colonial ideologies of witchcraft.

This externalization of witchcraft accusations is also there in Jane Parish's (1999) analysis of Akan anti-witchcraft shrines in Ghana. There are, among others, the relatively well-off young men who think they are under threat of attack by successful businesswomen. The transference of witchcraft beliefs

from rural to urban areas could lead to a displacement of witchcraft accusations from internal to external relations, as in Soweto. But, as the example from Papua New Guinea discussed here shows, the opposite could also take place. There witchcraft, which was with some communities an inter-group conflict, often carried along with warfare, with the coming of colonial pacification and capitalism, became a matter of intra-group reciprocity demands and denials.

The Americas: pre-colonial beliefs

In North America, it is not clear whether there were pre-colonial beliefs of the indigenous Americans in witchcraft and witches. But the prevalence of a belief in a medicine bag that is carried by witches could point to a pre-colonial cosmology that included witchcraft.

With regard to the Inca Empire in South America, Irene Silverblatt holds that Andean cosmology did not have a notion of evil, embodied in a Satanic being (1987: 173), although she notes that several interpreters of Andean religion did hold that there was some form of witchcraft in the Andes before Spanish colonization. What, however, is clear is that the Spanish regarded idol worshipping and the use of spells and spirits as witchcraft and maintained that this resulted from an alliance with the devil, much as witchcraft was regarded in early modern Europe at that time.

There was the same notion of the non-existence of an 'almighty spirit of evil in Andean figuration of the spirit world' (Taussig 1980). Michael Taussig pointed out that the Spanish in their endeavour to locate the devil had taken over the name of the Mayan god of the dead to denote the devil, a process they also followed with other indigenous gods. A similar process in Africa also linked indigenous forms of witchcraft belief with the Christian devil.

The indigenous Americans in the United States were brutally colonized and subjected to the most widespread genocide the world has seen. As they were forced to accommodate to the rising capitalism, the manner in which they envisaged witchcraft seems to have changed. While earlier witchcraft was supposed to originate outside the community, later witchcraft accusations were linked to the internal power struggles between those who wanted to link to the outside world and adapt to change and those who resisted this change, as the classic study of the Navaho by Clyde Kluckhohn (1944) and later others (Cave 1995, on the Shawnee) argued.

Turning to Amazonia, given the massive amount of research on forest communities in that region, one would have expected substantial discussion of witchcraft. But that is not so. Somewhat different terms are used in the Amazonian literature, such as light shamanism to refer to beneficial or

curing shamanism, while assault sorcery and dark shamanism both refer to witchcraft (Whitehead and Wright 2004).

Is it that there is little of witchcraft notions in Amazonia, or is it the predilections of the scholars that have led them to not pay attention to dark shamanism or witchcraft? Michael Heckenberger points out that '... in contrast to native Amazonian perspectives, which often place relatively great emphasis on dark shamans and their ways, witchcraft has received relatively little attention in regional ethnology' (2004: 180). He holds that this is due to the 'long-held assumption that power was subdued among Amazonian peoples' (ibid.: 180), which were seen as 'small, egalitarian, politically autonomous and impermanent "tropical forest tribes"' (ibid.: 182). In concluding his account of witch hunts among the Xinguano, Heckenberger points out that witchcraft is a central feature of many Amazonian peoples, in particular the Awawak, and culturally related peoples, such as the Bakiri and Karaja in southern Amazonia (ibid.: 197).

If one does not have a question, it is likely that one will not see an answer or a phenomenon that is occurring right there. Fernando Santos-Granero (2004), writing a chapter on child-witches in eastern Peru, mentions that a number of anthropologists had told him that they came to know later on, after their fieldwork, that there had been instances of accusations and persecutions, even an execution, of one such child. If one does not ask about witchcraft beliefs and witch persecution, it is unlikely that they will be told about them.

Struggles over capitalist transformation

As mentioned earlier, the Spanish in Peru equated the indigenous religion with devil worship. Witches, as per the exported European stereotype, were women, particularly old and poor women (Silverblatt 1987: 171). As one would expect, confessions were coerced from the accused women. Their knowledge of curing with herbs was taken as signs of diabolism. One of the accused women, Francesca, was '... time and again forced under torture to confess that her knowledge had a diabolic source'. Furthermore, 'when asked to ratify her depositions, she would staunchly deny the validity of these confessions, asserting that they had been made under duress' (ibid.: 190).

However, the women also used witchcraft accusations for their own purposes. For example, Juana's 'witchcraft' was directed against those who violated community norms of distribution, presumably not sharing in the manner prescribed by community norms. The women also turned the supposed witchcraft into a means of resistance, using it to revive traditional religion, leading to the inter-twining of 'ancient traditions and political resistance' (ibid.: 195).

In independent Mexico of the 1950s, June Nash looked at homicide, among the reasons for which were accusations of witchcraft. Unlike in colonial Peru, the executed witches were all men. When she asked why women do not get killed, she was told, 'They don't look for trouble' (Nash 1967: 457). In the community, the killing or murder of supposed witches was not looked on as a crime; rather, it was considered a '*reaction* to a crime, not a crime in itself' (ibid.: 461, emphasis added). Denunciation as a witch is confined within the community, as are the moral relationships that are said to have been transgressed. This seems similar to attitudes in Africa and even among indigenous peoples in central India, where the killing of a supposed witch is thought to be a moral act in defence of their traditional moral relationships.

In Mexico, among the Maya, commercial livestock rearing and alcohol production had not only increased income and wealth but also increased differences within the community. The old moral relationships mandated cooperation between brothers and neighbours, whether in threshing wheat or thatching a roof, accompanied by some sort of sharing of income and wealth. But the new activities led men and families to break these norms in order to support accumulation. The poor, who asked for the continuation of the old moral economy, would then be the persons to be attacked as witches. Such an attack on the poor did not reduce differentiation or the distribution of wealth; rather, it exacerbated the inequalities that grew with market-based economic relations. In these cases, among the Maya, witch hunting was not levelling; rather, it was pro-accumulation.

The following account of witches among the Xinguano in Brazil is summarized from Heckenberger (2004). They combine settled agriculture with fishing. In their combination of production activities, they are different from the small-scale forest villages, where hunting, gathering, and gardens dominate the economy. They are both internally ranked and integrated into a broader Xinguano society. They have a taboo against bloodshed, except when it is the blood of witches.

Knowledge of witchcraft is passed on from father to son, though, Heckenberger was told, women can also be witches. The Xinguanos have chiefs, and thus there is competition for political power: 'Witches and chiefs are traditional enemies' (ibid.: 183). The identification of so-called witches and their trial and execution is then part of the struggle for political power. The trial of supposed witches can only be carried out by the well-off, since it is an expensive affair. One does not know whether the chiefs and supposed witches represent different aspects or types of power, but witch hunts among the Xinguano are a matter of struggle over micro political power.

The Xinguano economy clearly produces a surplus, which is differentially accessed by different groups within the community. This gives rise to better-off

and worse-off families. The political structure of chiefdom also creates competition for political power. Heckenberg points out that the chiefdom is between 'egalitarian' society and the state (ibid.: 187). In this in-between state, there are witch hunts as political competition. The political economy of the Xinguano was based on the control of labour (Heckenberg 2003), but the role of the control of women's labour in this political economy is not clear. While among the Xinguano more men were suspected of being witches than women, among the Mascho of the same language group, women in large numbers suspected of being witches were tortured and killed (Langdon 2004: 308). Furthermore, witchcraft was concerned more with 'worldly political relations than with cosmological preoccupations' (ibid.).

Child witches

Another form of persecution is that of the alleged child-witch among four of the six Arawak-speaking peoples in eastern Peru. This account is based on Fernando Santos-Granero (2004), whom we have quoted above about anthropologists who missed the phenomenon during their fieldwork among these peoples. Among two of these Arawak peoples, the child-witches were usually a girl, often an orphan or someone captured during a raid. They were fatherless, rather than motherless, showing that fathers would have more power than mothers. The children were those who were not as children were expected to be—that is, they were disobedient or disrespectful of adults, hot tempered, or gloomy. The accused child-witches were subject to harsh treatment and torture, which, it was said, could not kill them because they were no longer considered to be human; what we have seen is a feature of witches for which they were tortured in Africa. The children were killed in particularly brutal ways.

The above treatment of accused child-witches is something we would not expect of anyone suspected of witchcraft. However, the charges against these children were no longer the staple of causing sickness or death. It could even be relatively mundane matters, such as stealing communal funds. Witchcraft here is no longer a matter of supernatural powers to cause harm, but matters of community behaviour.

What is of interest for our analysis is that these cases were often related to conflicts over change within these societies. The change was of two types, either Christianity or the leftist ideology of the Shining Path and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). Thus, it was not an overwhelming indigenous response to these external movements, but the differences or fissures within these societies about responses to these external influences.

Santos-Granero writes, 'A quick review of the cases outlined above shows that accusations of child witchcraft always proliferate in contexts of internal

conflicts between those who support or those who oppose the new faiths, dogmas, political ideologies and forms of knowledge introduced by foreign mostly white, "modernizing" agents' (2004: 296). The accused children belonged to families aligned with the foreigners, or the Shining Path and MRTA. In the 1989 Ashaninka uprising against the MRTA, many women and children supposed to be witches, most of whom were widows and their daughters, were reported to have been killed. Why widows and their daughters? It may be they were resource poor and defenceless. It could also be a manifestation of the usual opposition to women adopting new methods of thinking and living, rather than being defenders of the indigenous cultures. Such ideas are quite common among, say, indigenous peoples in India. Young men taking up new ways of thinking and living is acceptable, but women and girls are expected to be the bearers of traditional identity of indigenous peoples, as also among caste-based communities in India.

Contradictions in accumulation

The movement of witch persecution from matters of cosmology to that of politics, in both South and North America, has been seen as ways of relating to the capitalist transformation or understanding the nature of the capitalist economy itself. In these cases too, women seem to have been denounced as witches less than men, as among the Navaho (Kluckhohn 1944: 66). However, what was important was the adaptation of new methods by women, as among the Iroquois. Women, as one would expect, had been central to hoe agriculture. But they were forbidden to plough and do their own planting. When older women continued to do their own planting, they were accused of witchcraft and threatened with execution (Sanday 1981). Among the Navaho, the women denounced as witches were those past menopause or childless (Kluckhohn 1944: 106).

More frequent were the denunciations of those who became rich. While becoming rich very quickly might attract the charge of having accumulated by robbing the dead of jewellery, those who were stingy or did not give generously to their relatives could also be denounced as witches. As Kluckhohn puts it, 'One of the most basic strains in Navaho society arises out of the incompatibility between the demands of familism and the emulation of European patterns in the accumulation of capital' (ibid.: 111). As we have seen, this levelling or de-accumulating tendency frequently occurs as a critique of market-oriented moral values.

In the sugar plantations of Colombia, workers who made a pact with the devil could produce and thus earn more (Taussig 1980). But in a startling twist to the tale, their additional earnings could not be invested in any

enterprise. The extra earnings must be spent immediately on luxury goods! This injection is very much in line with the capitalist ethos that workers do not invest their income; they only spend it on consumption, showing the importance of workers' consumption to the capitalist market. Taussig's analysis of the devil and commodity fetishism is an important contribution in drawing the meaning of the imagery of the supernatural in its relation to alienated socio-economic processes of capital.

In the tin mines of Bolivia, the workers regarded the devil as the true owners of the mines (Nash 1972; Taussig 1980). This analogical reasoning can be understood as reflecting the alienated nature of labour under capitalism. Unlike independent craft workers who own what they produce, wage labourers have no claim over what they produce. In return for their labour time, they receive only money income, with which they can buy what is possible for their consumption. As far as the object of production is concerned, there is a shift from production for use to production for sale, or commodity production. In the process, the relation between the mine-owners and the workers is translated into a relation between things, between the labour time that workers put in and the commodities they consume. Relations between people are transformed into relations between things, what Marx identified as commodity fetishism. The devil then becomes the fetishized representation of the mine-owner or the capitalist. The devil clearly is a metaphor for the real relations of alienated labour.

Is the witchcraft complex also to be taken not as something real, but as a metaphor for the conflict between norms, whether of gendered behaviour or of sharing? Metaphors are a useful way of understanding, as they relate something that is commonly known (the devil) to something that is not so-commonly known (alienated labour). In the witchcraft complex too, the known notion of the witch is related to the less-known conflict between gendered and other norms in times of structural transformation. Witchcraft metaphors can serve as easy explanations of complex processes of structural change.

CONCLUSIONS

10 Articulations

This chapter lays out the analytical framework that has helped us understand witch hunts. In particular, we elaborate on the concept of articulation and the way we have used and demonstrated it in this book.

We have used three variables to explain witch hunts: a culture of witchcraft beliefs; gender struggles leading to the creation and re-creation of patriarchy; and structural or major socio-economic transformations, including the formation of private property and of the capitalist market economy. The reference is made to 'structural or major socio-economic transformations' in which the creation or re-creation of patriarchy is itself a socio-economic transformation. Witch hunts are the dependent variable, while culture, gender struggles, and structural transformations are the independent variables. So, how do these three independent variables or factors fit together to create the historical experience of witch hunts?

The explanatory scheme is not monocausal; it is multicausal. This can lead to over-determination, in the sense that two factors may reinforce each other. For instance, gender struggles and other structural transformations may work together to determine women as witches in early modern Europe. At the same time, structural transformations may also explain why men were witches in some instances.

The factor of a culture of witchcraft beliefs, or beliefs in humans acquiring supernatural powers with which they can cause harm to others, has a different status from the other two factors. It is a necessary condition, without which witch hunts cannot take place. Evidence of this proposition is seen in Ronald Hutton's statement that Siberia is the one large cultural region that was without witches (Hutton 2017: 11). There are shamans, who mediate with the supernatural world, but they are benevolent, not

malevolent. The Siberian people did not have witch hunts (however, now things may be different, as we noticed in some recent reports). Also, there is some evidence that the Celtic peoples (of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland) had very few witch trials (Hutton 2017: 243). Scotland was the site of a furious witch hunt, as well studied by Christina Larner (1981). But the area of the Scottish witch hunt was on the border with England, and thus subject to the influence of English witch beliefs. However, in upland Scotland the Celtic culture seems to have held sway.

Two caveats to the above propositions. Among the Sami people of north or Arctic Norway, there was a witch hunt, and the witches were men, the former shamans of the Sami. This was brought about by the influence of Christianization, which looked everywhere for the devil and found it in the male shamans.

What we have put forward is an explanatory framework, backed with some evidence. It is not a hypothesis that has been substantially tested against empirical data, which can then be shown to be less false than other explanations. It is our hope that this explanatory framework will help organize future research work to see if it is less false, in the style of Harding (2013), than other explanations.

Witchcraft beliefs have existed and continue to exist even today. But such beliefs, on their own, do not lead to witch hunts. In our case studies, in a few cases we were not able to identify any factor other than the belief in witchcraft for the witch hunt. But, given the importance cited in the literature to jealousy, we are inclined to think that further investigation would have uncovered some other proximate factor for the witch hunt.

If it were argued that witchcraft beliefs or cultures that believed in witchcraft were themselves sufficient to give rise to witch hunts, it would not be possible to explain the periodicity of witch hunts. Why in early modern Europe and not in the Middle Ages? Why did the Catholic Church and its demonology doctrine come up at this time to drive the witch hunts? It is necessary to link these ideological developments with the ongoing structural socio-economic transformations, not as a matter of the economic transitions determining the ideologies but as a manner of articulation of the two sets of practices, of belief in witchcraft and structural socio-economic transitions, so that they function together.

What the above questions show is that it is necessary at each point of time and in each location to establish the articulation of witchcraft beliefs with other practices, whether in the economic, political, or other spheres, in order to result in witch hunts. We briefly summarize some of the articulations that have come up. Before that we set out what we mean by articulation.

Conceptualizing articulation

Articulation allows the analysis of culture, such as of witchcraft beliefs, to move away from a deterministic analysis of culture as being the result of modes of production to one that links these beliefs to various types of economic, social, gender, and politcal relations. Thus, witchcraft beliefs may exist in the context of regulating surplus production in plough agriculture. They may also exist as ways of understanding alienated labour under capitalism or even the mysteries of trans-Atlantic slave trading. Witchcraft beliefs then are not just remnants of some past mode of production, though they may be continued from a past age. Sahlins (1981) had pointed out that the new is interpreted in terms of the old cultural presuppositions, and Marx said, 'The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living' (in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* [1937/2010]). But these old methods of thinking are themselves likely to be refashioned in the course of articulations with new relations and issues. They may not be just re-statements from the past. Though they may have a long history, witchcraft beliefs would need to be understood in terms of the linkages to current relations and the conflict between old and new relations of production and distribution.

Articulation of, say, witchcraft beliefs with the mode of production is neither derived from the mode of production nor defined by it. As we have seen, witchcraft beliefs and witch accusations can arise in different types of production relations and in the manner in which these production relations are themselves being transformed. Thus, witch accusations have arisen both in the transformation of hoe to plough agriculture and also in the transformation of production for use into production for sale. Whether witch hunts occur in these structural transformations depends on the initial conditions, that is, the prior existence of beliefs in persons possessing or acquiring supernatural powers and causing harm with these powers, and on the manner in which these transformations are occurring. As we saw, transformations that result in a broad sharing of the benefits of higher productivity may not result in witch hunts, while transformations that result in a narrow accrual of benefits may trigger witch hunts. Depending on both initial and current conditions makes articulation contingent, not something one can read off from the relations of production or even on the fact of transformation. One can, however, predict that periods of massive structural transformation, such as in the growth of capitalism, are likely to increase spiritual insecurity and the consequent scapegoating of women who do better as witches.

We use the concept of articulation to see how the different strands and domains of the analyses are connected. The concept of articulation was used by Harold Wolpe (1980) to concretize the connection between the capitalist

mode of production in the South African mines and the African Bantustans or 'homelands'. The wage labour supplied to the mines from the homelands was subsidized with part of the cost of reproduction of labour being borne by the non-capitalist economy of the homelands. Since the workers returned to the homelands on retirement, wages in the mines did not cover the pensions that would have been required had the workers stayed on in the mine areas. The flows of labour and value between these two modes of production, lineage-based peasant economy and capitalist mines, established an articulation of these modes of production.

At an economic level, this analysis was generalized by Claude Meillassoux in *Maidens, Meals and Money* (1981) who showed that rural women's labour provided a subsidy to the wages paid to migrant labour and, thus, was a subsidy to urban industry. This process of connection was demonstrated in showing that low wages paid to workers in the global value chain (GVC)–organized garment industry in India are subsidized by the labour of rural households that support garment workers in illness and when they are periodically laid off (Nathan et al. 2019).

The articulation of the non-capitalist mode of production in the homelands or the rural economy in contemporary India with the capitalist mode of production in the mines or of garment GVCs, establishes a link between the two. The connection has been established by capitalists' search for maximum profit. Once the connection, the articulation has been established it tends to reproduce itself, until conditions change, such as either rural incomes going up or the mine and garment employers not requiring migrant labour.

Articulation does not prejudge, say, the capitalist system to be dominant and thus the leading factor in the articulation, relentlessly driving the transformation of the other, older mode. There is no teleology in this analysis of articulation. Articulation can be of the type where those from the older mode utilize the newer mode to satisfy functions that are not of the new system. This was seen in the case of foragers in India who undertook wage labour only when they needed it to supplement their gatherer-hunter activities (Bird-David 1983).

From a concept in the economic sphere to explain links between different production systems, the concept of articulation was extended to the analysis of other spheres of practice and, in the process, generalized by the cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1985). We quote this statement by Hall that by articulation he means

> … a connection or link which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or fact of life, but which requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not 'eternal' but has constantly to be renewed, which can under

> certain circumstances disappear or be overthrown, leading to the old linkages being dissolved and new connections—re-articulations—being forged. (1985: 113)

Articulation, whether between various spheres of practice or between economic systems, involves power within these segments. Between economic systems as between capitalist and peasant production, there is the greater power, not just economic but also political, of the capitalist system, pushing the articulation to its advantage. This advantage may even lie in allowing the peasant production system to continue so as to provide a subsidy to capitalist wages. The power can also be exerted in the form of the utilization of cultural forms, where the original creators are ignored or forgotten. We give an example from the world of modern painting.

Picasso, in moving away from the naturalized representation that characterized Western art and creating cubism, was profoundly influenced by exposure to sculptures from Africa and the Pacific. They provided a 'shock', he said, as he developed 'violently distorted and depersonalized masks' on the African model (Arnason and Prather 1998: 131). In this articulation between Western and African art forms, the power of the Western artist, path-breaking as Picasso was, comes in to bring about a very unequal distribution of fame and profits. Power is a necessary element in any analysis of articulation, whether of economic systems or cultural forms between Western and African artists.

Power has been brutally manifest in the colonial attempts to force colonies into certain types of trade. Besides the power relations in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, there are also the examples of power used in the destruction of the Indian handicraft production of cotton fabrics and the Opium Wars used respectively to force India and China into trade as a form of articulation. India had to buy factory-made textiles, while China had to buy opium.

Power was used in the enclosure of the commons in England. Through this process, resistance to which also led to witch accusations, the articulation of the peasants with the growing capitalist production was changed from one of exchanging products to that of selling labour power for wages.

In earlier chapters, we have often used the terms 'socio-economic transformation' and even 'transition to capitalism'. These are specific types of articulations, articulations that took place over long periods of time. But in these articulations, there is a notion of dominance of one of the two modes of production involved. This dominance is not inherent to the concept of articulation but can be added to it, in order to provide a form of transition. Under what conditions is this type of dominant articulation likely to occur?

The two types of articulation that we have looked at are those of hoe with plough agriculture-cum-livestock rearing and of peasant with capitalist production.

In both cases, the newer form of production is more productive than the earlier one. Plough agriculture with livestock rearing is more productive than hoe agriculture. Capitalist production with its division of labour and increasing returns to scale is also more productive per capita than peasant production. It is this superiority in productivity per capita that leads to the newer mode of production dominating in the articulation—of course, with the help of political power, whether of the colonial power or even of the post-colonial, contemporary states. These are not pre-ordained teleologies, but actual historical developments or transformations.

Aspirations and transformation

Structural socio-economic transformation can be brought about through force, as in the colonial era instances of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the deindustrialization of India, and the opening up of China. It can also be brought about by changes in aspirations of various classes of persons concerned. This can occur at the level of both the rising industrial and trading classes and also at the level of ordinary peoples. The ambitions and aspirations of the first set of classes are easily understood—they wish to mimic the capitalist development that empowered the colonial powers. But the transformation of aspirations of ordinary peoples is also part of the capitalist transformation.

We have noted earlier the way in which some gatherer-hunters have related to wage labour—procuring as much of income as they feel they require from wages and not trying to maximize their wage income, often to the frustration of their employers. We remember a case in Telangana, India, where landlords gave the wages of labourers, who were recently settled gatherer-hunters, to their wives and that too only once a week. They explained their practice as a way to get men to keep coming for employment, since their wives would control the use of the money and restrict men's consumption of alcohol. Were wages paid directly to the men, the women also told us, their men would not go back to work until they needed more money. The women explained that in this manner they could make sure that there was enough money for food, children's school expenses, medical care, and so on.

What this shows is the importance of aspirations in people changing from one form of earning income to another form. Women in this case had more fully taken up the market-based norm of maximizing wage incomes, while men had not. We had also mentioned the case of a woman from the same recently settled gatherer-hunter community who had told us she was taking up petty trade to earn a higher income, as she did not want her daughter to be illiterate like she was. At the micro level, the accumulative mode will only

dominate the articulation with the redistributive mode if people change their aspirations such that they require higher incomes, even if they do not become income maximizers.

The change in aspirations is the process of establishing hegemony of a new form of consumption, one that promotes savings and accumulation. Hegemony of ways of thinking conducive to a certain relation of production is not something automatic; it has to be established. The change in norms that goes along with changed aspirations are also something established over time, in conflict between different normative systems, those of sharing and redistribution against those of saving and accumulation; these conflicts, as we have seen in this book, are closely connected with the rise of witch hunts. Witch hunts can be a way of establishing the hegemony of accumulation; witch hunts can also be a way of opposing accumulation, or of opposing a particular morality of accumulation.

We will now look at the way in which witchcraft beliefs are articulated with processes of gender struggle and structural socio-economic transformation to produce the witch hunts that are the subject of our enquiry.

Struggles over patriarchal structures

The first articulation of witch hunts we saw was with struggles over gender relations. In the case of indigenous peoples in central India, the myths created two categories of persons: women any of whom could be a witch, and men (not all men but only some who had the knowledge and training) who were witch finders. Witch myths established gender boundaries, which were patrolled by witch hunts, and women who transgressed them were in danger of being persecuted as witches.

It is our conjecture that in Africa there could have been a similar persecution of women in the transition from matrilineal to patrilineal property systems and the creation of overall patriarchal systems. In Chapter 6 we have put forward some evidence in support of this thesis. Obviously much more work is needed to show that the proposition linking witch hunts with gender struggles is less false than that which denies any gender connection of the witch question.

The matrilineal systems were based on hoe cultivation and had minimal surpluses, while the patrilineal and patriarchal systems were based on plough cultivation, along with animal rearing and other regular surplus-producing economic activities, such as trade in gold and slaves. The reason for our thesis that there was a gender struggle in this process is that we expect major changes in gender relations, such as the creation of patriarchy, to have been accompanied by major struggles between women and men. The growing

importance of men-controlled economic activities, such as animal rearing and plough agriculture, would have played a role in this transformation. But from our analysis of transitions among indigenous peoples in central India, we expect this to have been accompanied by changes in the access to knowledge, including spiritual knowledge and the creation of an ideology of women's inferiority and even the demonization of women. The demonization of women that is part of witchcraft in much of colonial Africa is likely to have had a longer history. As Jack Goody (1957) argued about Ashanti people, the observed anti-witchcraft cults surely had a pre-colonial existence.

An important articulation of witchcraft beliefs is with women's exclusion from key spheres of ritual knowledge. Men's ownership of these spheres of knowledge gave them power. Women were excluded from this knowledge on pain of denunciation as witches if they tried to gain access. However, the same witchcraft accusations also turned women's knowledge, which at one point was prized, into evil knowledge, particularly so in Africa. Wise women were denounced as witches. The beliefs of having supernatural powers are the same in these two cases, but in the former the witch boundaries were used to exclude women from socially higher valued knowledge, while in the latter the witch accusations were used to turn women's knowledge into something socially harmful. Witch accusations, one can see, are quite malleable and can be articulated with a variety of social situations, of course, with the condition that it is women's knowledge or denial of access to superior knowledge that is at stake.

Yet another articulation of witch accusations is with women's knowledge of birth control measures in early modern Europe. The attack on women's control of birth was linked to the population policies of Mercantilism in the backdrop of the decline in Europe's population. The demonization of women's control over birth connected with the importance of population growth. While in the earlier cases of indigenous peoples and Africa there was the articulation of witch hunts with the creation of patriarchy, in the case of early modern Europe it was a matter of re-creating patriarchy. This occurred in the context of meeting the challenge of women's growing economic importance and women's appearance as autonomous legal subjects, which were met by a re-creation of patriarchy with witch hunts.

Witch hunting as women hunting in early modern Europe was determined with beliefs of women as by nature liable to be witches, attempts to negate whatever limited control women had over their bodies, denunciation of the poor women who asked for traditional entitlements, women's opposition to the enclosure of the commons—all these factors coming together in witch hunting as women hunting. At the same time, the contradictions of the primary accumulation of capital with the existing peasant economy also drew

some specific categories of men, mainly of those men who refused to follow the earlier moral economy of the peasant or attempted to protect women from being persecuted as witches. The different articulations of witchcraft beliefs with gendered roles in capitalist transformations produced the gendered nature of witch hunts in early modern Europe, affecting mainly women but also some specific categories of men.

Patriarchy has also been seen to be articulated differently with different relations of production. In feudal Europe, patriarchy existed with the women not being legal adults, not owning land and other property as its key gender features. In the transformation in early modern Europe, however, women became legal adults, liable to be charged and tried. With this legal change, patriarchy was manifest in the trial of women for various sex and reproduction related crimes, the demonization of women's knowledge of control of reproductive processes. This is also patriarchy, but in another form. Thus, the manner in which patriarchy links or connects with the economy changes from one production relation to another. This type of approach, not looking at patriarchy as one fixed set of relations, promotes an investigation of the different ways in which patriarchy is actually linked with overall socio-economic systems.

In the creation of patriarchy, we have put forward the hypothesis that a crucial role is played by men's monopolization of the sphere of socially higher valued knowledge. This in the case of indigenous, pre-state, or proto-state societies was that of ritual. This is monopolized by men, and women, at the risk of being persecuted as witches, are excluded from this higher valued knowledge. However, one would expect that the knowledge regarded as socially higher valued would change. With the growth of the market economy and the generalization of money as the measure of value, that which provides the highest monetary return would be defined as the superior knowledge. The confinement of women to the sphere of reproduction, which did not provide monetary returns, while men took charge of the sphere of production, which provided monetary returns, was the way in which knowledge of production was valued socially higher than knowledge of reproduction.

In contemporary Africa, women have been advancing in the vast spaces of the unorganized economy. This poses a challenge to the old patriarchal mould of man as the provider, as Achille Mbembe (2006) points out. This challenge to patriarchy, we think, is connected to the continuation, if not increase, in witch hunts in countries of Africa as also among indigenous peoples of central India. The articulation of witchcraft beliefs and challenges to patriarchy need to be investigated in particular circumstances, not taken as a given.

Capitalist structural transformation

Witchcraft beliefs are connected with other contradictions in early modern Europe in a gendered process; this means that women and men were not treated equally. The primary accumulation of capital with the formation of wealth in the form of capital and the dispossession of peasants from the means of production, agricultural lands and the commons, created a class dependent on wage labour for subsistence. These changes also revealed the tensions between the morality of limited sharing in systems of subsistence and that of individual accumulation in the market-based economy. In this gendered process, while any woman could be a witch, only some men, for example, those who became rich and violated existing community sharing norms, or already had some connections with the magical, such as shepherds in France or Sami shamans in Arctic Norway, were also part of the witch hunts.

Witch hunts among indigenous peoples in central India and in Africa have been related to two different types of structural transformations occurring somewhat simultaneously: the creation of patriarchy in the shift from hoe to plough agriculture, and capitalist transformation. These two processes, themselves long-term processes, have occurred simultaneously and, we would think, multiplied their effects on peoples. We think of this as a concrete example of what Mbembe points out, wherein the effects of long-term developments occurring simultaneously are multiplied (2000: 260).

However, the sphere in which witch accusations operate change in the two situations. The first situation is that of the reorganization of property from matrilineal to patrilineal systems, related to shifts in the family and the formation of patriarchy. In that transformation, the witchcraft dialogue was linked to family issues, or Peter Geschiere's zone of intimacy, which could go beyond the family but remained within fairly closed areas of interaction. For most people, interactions were within this zone of neighbourhood, of kinship.

The second situation is that of the growth of capitalism, when distances of interaction and exchange increased, most violently in Africa with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Over time, particularly with post-colonial capitalist development, witch accusations often shifted from the neighbourhood to not just returning migrants but also anyone better off in urban locations.

Further, the picture of what witches were accused of doing also often changed. Witchcraft was not only supposed to cause death, as earlier, but with capitalist relations death was followed by zombie existence, where the dead person was used to accumulate wealth. Many contemporary witchcraft imaginaries in Africa picture the zombie as not only the death of a person but also their alienated existence as labour with no other life but to work for capital accumulation.

Along with this alienated labour for capital accumulation, there is another feature of the capitalist transformation in Africa and in the indigenous areas of India. In these economies the unorganized sector predominates, and in this sector it is women who have been able to do better than men as earners. This, as Mbembe points out, threatens the picture of men as household heads (2006). In addition, there is the contradiction that Franz Fanon saw a long time ago, that between the growth of the indigenous capitalists or petty capitalists and the rest, as a result of which the question in contemporary South Africa is said to be not 'Why are whites rich and blacks poor?' but 'Why are some blacks rich and other blacks poor?' (Ashforth 2005: 93). There is thus a change in the relationships within which accusations occur. They are no longer confined to the zone of intimacy but extend to anyone better off within the black community. In South Africa and Ghana, witch accusations are no longer confined to those within the family or even the neighbourhood. They can be aimed at anyone who is better off, even if they are not within the compass of one's kinship-based moral economy. In a number of ways shown above, the articulation of witch hunts with capitalist transformation has changed from the earlier articulation with kinship transformations to distant relations as against the nearer zone of kinship.

Where the witchcraft beliefs brought within their ambit the distance relations of, say, migration, they nevertheless targeted those relatives and neighbours who did not share the benefits of migration. This has the effect of not identifying those who are actually the accumulators of migrant workers' alienated labour. Consequently, one might say it obfuscates the economic relations of migrant labour, concentrating on those who do not share their savings and leaving out the distant accumulators.

The intensity of witch hunts in Africa and the indigenous areas in Asia we have looked at, then, is due to the coming together of a number of transformations—that within families from matriliny to patriliny, and the formation of patriarchy, along with the primary accumulation of both capital and the separation of myriad workers from the means of production. The simultaneous articulation of witchcraft beliefs with such massive, structural changes produces the spiritual insecurity that characterizes much of Africa and indigenous areas in India, as also Papua New Guinea. In this process there are also new articulations displacing older articulations.

New ways of using surplus

The change in the articulation of witchcraft beliefs with well-settled capitalist relations is seen in the South American notion of the Bolivian mine-owner as the devil himself, and workers who earn more in sugar plantations in

Colombia as being able to do this because of their pact with the devil. These are powerful metaphors of alienated labour but have no relation to the kin-based or community relationships on which witch accusations used to be based, whether in Africa, India, or early modern Europe.

The articulation of witchcraft beliefs with the economic structure undergoes an interesting change in Papua New Guinea. In the pre-colonial period, witches were often external to the concerned community and part of war-making activities between communities. After independence and the growth of a salaried class of employees, witch accusations have now come home, with rural families demanding their share of employees' salaries from urban migrants. This is the reverse of the movement in Africa, where witchcraft has moved from kinship-based intimacy to the wider world of anyone better off in the black African community. In Papua New Guinea, the movement has been from other communities to kin within one's own community.

Articulation is not only about different spheres within a mode of production, using the term 'mode of production' without the baggage of necessary sequences of modes of production. Articulation is also between modes of production, as in the original South African analysis. The conflict taken up in witchcraft accusations is often between ways of accumulation or ways of sharing some part, at least, of the surplus. Witch accusations have got a new lease of life with these contradictions between old and new forms of using surpluses.

Simultaneously, there has also been a change in the links between witch accusations and the capitalist economy. One form of witch-hunt-based opposition was to the new moral economy of market-based return, asserting instead the old moral economy of sharing. In the examples given earlier, in South America but also in Africa (Englund 1996), there is an argument about the manner in which surpluses are used, not against capitalism as such. Accumulation is accepted, but the manner in which the surplus is used is questioned. Witch imageries can be both an argument with capitalism and also an argument within capitalism.

Agency and its context

In line with conceptualizations of women's agency over the past several decades, our definition of women's agency has five major dimensions: having unmediated (that is, not through marriage relations) right to control and own resources; freedom from fear of violence within the home and outside in streets and workplaces; ability to think and act to secure their strategic interest and, if necessary, change gender norms; decision-making over their reproductive

work, including birthing and nurturing; and having representation and voice in society and influencing policy. Feminist analysis is built on both the gender analysis of the political economy of resource control and the exclusion of women from spheres of knowledge, traditional and modern (Kelkar 2011; Kelkar and Jha 2016).

Our concern here is women's 'domesticated agency' (Nyamnjoh 2001). Domesticated has different meanings in different societies. Women have been asked to give up their right to own land and other resources in favour of their male relatives and, if they dared to oppose this, have been denounced as witches, facing eviction from their homes and village and, often, a brutal death. Despite state laws against witchcraft accusations and *ojha*s (witch finders), in our 110 cases in 5 states of India, only rarely were women able to successfully resist these attempts at 'domesticated agency', that is, to do what they wish, provided they conform to the demands of the community, led by men. Yet the very fact of these witch accusations shows that women have been attempting to redefine and achieve their own ideas of agency, well-being, and strategic interest, something different from that of their male-dominated community definitions of agency.

Agency changes with economic and social systems. For instance, in an economy with little division of labour, except that of ritual specialists, required skills are available to all. On the other hand, in a capitalist economy, many skills are developed and are differently rewarded in the market. Investment is needed to acquire greater skills and new capabilities. Should women not have the right to invest in their own development of skills, irrespective of community norms? Or to invest for their children to acquire those skills that secure higher returns in the market and provide a life with dignity and human rights? These are ways in which agency changes from economies with a limited division of labour and knowledge to those with elaborate divisions of labour and knowledge.

Beyond technological and patriarchal determinism

The introduction of aspirations and culture (in the shape of witchcraft beliefs) into articulation means that we do not have a technologically determined patriarchal change. Plough agriculture is superior to hoe agriculture in that it increases productivity and thus per capita income. However, in order for a switch to occur, among the members of the community and of its ruling classes, there must in some manner be a linking of changed aspiration and production systems. Further, such a change also needs to secure a base among the ordinary women and men. Without such a change in aspirations of the subaltern, there would be what Ranajit Guha had called *Dominance Without*

Hegemony (1997). Hegemony here depends on the subalterns changing their own aspirations, obviously unevenly and often through coercion, to somewhat correspond to those of, say, capitalism requiring both wage labourers and consumers. The contradictions and unevenness of such transitions could be seen in the spread of witch accusations and witch hunts in the historical periods of these historical transitions. The very fact of so many women being denounced as witches, whether among indigenous peoples and peasants in central India or Africa, itself shows that women are asserting their agency and consequently being attacked for not accepting patriarchal norms and claiming their rights against male dominance of resources and social norms.

The move away from technological and patriarchal determinism means that we need not see patriarchy as an inevitable or necessary feature of human history. That it actually occurred could be the result of the manner in which ideologies of kinship and property articulated with production systems. Stephen Gould once said that if we re-ran the evolutionary clock, it could well happen that human beings would not recur in earth's history. Similarly, if we re-ran the clock of human history, there may well be no recurrence of patriarchy. The importance of such an approach is that it helps us affirm that, even in the present context, another world is possible—a world without beliefs in witchcraft, certainly a world without witch hunts and without patriarchy.

Policies for Ending Witch Hunts

11

How do we deal with witch hunts and the related witchcraft beliefs that underlie them? We deal with it as a contemporary problem, drawing lessons from the end of the witch hunts in early modern Europe. Whether in India or Africa, the colonizers passed laws to punish witch persecutions. Their actions led to the perception that the colonizers were supporters of witches. When the indigenous peoples in central India or African peasants rebelled against colonial rule, their insurgencies were accompanied by internal cleansings of supposed witches. This was so among the Santhal and Munda in India, as also the Maji Maji uprising in Tanzania. It also occurred in the run-up to the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Subsequently, some of the newly independent nations formulated official policies of dealing with witchcraft with state-sponsored witch hunts. Benin was the most notable of these examples. Tanzania, Cameroon, South Africa, and other countries also formulated policies to end witchcraft. In Cameroon and Malawi the judiciary played an important role in trying those accused of witchcraft. In South Africa cadres of the new ruling party, in league with traditional witch finders, carried out witch hunts in the Northern Province.

In India the situation was different, as the indigenous peoples were part of the federal Indian legal system. But when the provincial state of Jharkhand, dominated by the indigenous people, was set up, there was more attention given to the reported increase in witch hunts. A series of laws against witch persecutions and even against witch accusations were enacted by Jharkhand and other concerned states in India: Bihar, Rajasthan, and Odisha.

There have been three types of approaches to dealing with witch hunts. The first is to deem it a criminal act and legally deal with it accordingly. Whether explicitly or not, the implication is that there is no such thing as witchcraft. The second is to make the oppression of supposed witches

legal, whether legal in codified terms or customary in community terms. For example, the European witch hunt was of the second type, sanctioning the killing of socially notified witches. This approach assumes that there are witches who utilize their supernatural powers to harm others.

More recently, there has been an attempt to devise a third way to deal with witchcraft and witch hunts. After the witch hunts in the Northern Province of South Africa, the Ralushai Commission was set up to go into the issue (1996). The matter was also taken up by the Commission on Gender Equality (South Africa) (1998). Both of them took the position that there was witchcraft through which harm was caused to others, but the killing and persecution of women as witches had to be stopped. But both of these Commissions, as pointed out by Geschiere (2006), ended up with ambiguities. They used the term 'witchcraft killings', which could mean both the supposed killings by witches and the killings of women (and some men) accused of being witches.

What can be the objectives of policy, whether for states, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or communities, with regard to witch hunts? The first one, obviously is that of stopping the torture, killing, and other forms of persecution of alleged witches. But, as our and other analyses point out, there is a cultural base of persecution in beliefs about the use of witchcraft to cause harm to others. Consequently, it would be necessary, in some manner, to deal with these belief systems. These belief or explanatory systems, however, are also related to the 'spiritual insecurity', as Ashforth (2005) terms it, which is connected to both a long-drawn-out structural socio-economic transformation and to the understanding of the nature of occult forces in such a change. This long-drawn-out structural socio-economic transformation occurred in early modern Europe and is still underway in many parts of the Global South, including parts of India and many countries of Africa, such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda, where 'witches are identified mostly with women or infants' (Terence Ranger 1980: 45, quoted in GechikoNyabwari and NkongeKagema 2014: 15). In brief, it is what was called primary accumulation, which includes not only the formation of money hoards as capital but also the separation of many producers from the means of production in turning them into wage labourers. It also includes a shift from production for use to production for exchange, and the shift from norms of reciprocity in the distribution of consumption to individualized accumulation. Finally, it is also part of the formation or re-formation of patriarchy.

From the above, we derive four objectives of policy: to eliminate witch hunts, to deal with spiritual insecurity and perceived injustice, to foster non-supernatural ways of thinking about misfortune and jealousy, and to foster non-patriarchal forms of masculinity.

Culture and witch hunts

The Ralushai Commission (1996) states that the traditional institutions regarded witchcraft as an embedded part of social life in which mainly women were accused and that healers, also known as *sangoma* or *inyanga*, were the witch finders. The Ralushai Commission also condemned the brutal killings of hundreds of alleged witches as senseless and barbaric. The Commission, however, proposed that the law should recognize that witchcraft does exist, while also criminalizing the killing of alleged witches.

Similarly, the Commission on Gender Equality (1998), soon after the Ralushai Commission, called for a paradigm shift from the current practice which 'operates from a premise that denies the belief in witchcraft' (1998: 328). The premise, as we have argued, may not be that of the denial in witchcraft beliefs but that this is not a justified belief. Nevertheless, it was seen necessary to acknowledge the social existence of the belief in witchcraft, and the question was how to deal with it.

Attempts to take account of the existence of witchcraft beliefs as reality, however, have ended up reinforcing the beliefs and not in ending the problem of witchcraft. If anything this is the reflexivity of witchcraft beliefs—continued action on this basis only reinforces the belief, a self-reinforcing prophecy par excellence. As Gaskill points out, 'witchcraft, it was once said, is a crime which is created by the measures taken for its suppression.' (2008: 370). Summing the effects of Cameroon witchcraft trials, or judicial offensive against *la sorcellerie* (witchcraft), Geschiere says, '… it seems to have aggravated the popular obsession with the proliferation of witchcraft as an omnipresent form of disorder' (2006: 236).

The witchcraft dialogue is inherently circular. Witchcraft exists because one believes in it. As a Cameroon judge had pointed out, finally proof of witchcraft follows from its being an 'intimate conviction' (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990: 149). There can be no acceptable ontological argument about such beliefs in the existence of witchcraft. As Larner had pointed out about witches in Europe, witch hunts are the process whereby the politically powerful search for persons for their 'supposed attributes rather than for anything they have done' (Larner 1981: 3). When actions cannot be proved, then there is a fallback on beliefs of having caused harm or supposed attributes.

However, when beliefs are brought to court, they cannot be the basis for judgment. A judge of the Malawi High Court held that belief alone cannot be the evidence of being guilty of an offence, '… there must be proof to whatever is alleged to have been done' (Ashforth 2015: 19). This brings up an interesting point about what the accused witches were said to have done. In what manner can anyone make a case that a murder committed by X is actually the result of witchcraft carried out by Y? Or that loss in a business

venture is due to witchcraft and not poor management or market pressures? If accusers were asked to present proof of the use of supernatural powers, by definition there could be no such proof, since that is what the supernatural is supposed to be.

Nevertheless, legal judgments over time have insisted on proof of actions which witches are supposed to have carried out. In early modern England, Gaskill points out, there was a mid-sixteenth-century shift in what was asked for in witch trials. Hearsay or rumour was rejected as a form of proof. 'By mid-century the idea was well established that evidence, originating from witnesses or documents, had become the means for a jury and judge "to determine matters of fact"' (Gaskill 2008: 640).

In contemporary Africa too, judges are asking for evidence other than so-called confessions, the dubious value of which we discussed earlier. 'The key to this emergent jurisprudence is a shared commitment on the part of the judicial authorities, in both formal and informal judicial forums, to the need for demonstrable evidence to sustain accusations of witchcraft and an insistence on the distinction between *being* a witch and *performing* witchcraft' (Ashforth, 2015: 8, emphasis in original).

Legal actions and nominal punishment

One can make a valid distinction between belief and action based on that belief. There can be no way in which certain forms of thinking or belief can be made illegal; the only way of eliminating those beliefs is to replace them with other beliefs or systems of explanation. It is important to point out the distinction between belief and action on the basis of that belief. The Comaroffs quote a South African Provincial Minister, Seth Nthai, as saying, 'Belief is not a problem of law and order. Violence is a problem of law and order' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004: 193). It is the violence of the witch hunts carried out by the 'comrades' in the Northern Province of South Africa, where 'between 1994 and 1996 hundreds of people were killed … after being accused of witchcraft' (Haya 1995: 339–54, in GechikoNyabwari and NkongeKagema 2014: 9). This became a major problem for the government and the people. The colonial anti-witchcraft laws did not make beliefs in witchcraft illegal, but were focused on actions following from those beliefs (Redding 2019: 5).

Beliefs in the existence of persons with supernatural powers have probably existed and still exist in large parts of the world. There may also be ideas that they cause harm to others. What, however, are needed are deterrents to turning these beliefs into actions that harm others, the supposed witches. The experience with the implementation of laws dealing with witch persecutions is

not so good. In the case of South Africa, the Ralushai Commission summed up the performance of courts: (*a*) failure of some courts to act is a crucial failure, since it must have encouraged carrying on with witch hunts; (*b*) punishments were often nominal, further encouraging witch hunts; (*c*) in a few cases, the main perpetrators of the killings were not punished; and (*d*) no judicial action was taken against the witch finders (Geschiere 2006: 234).

For Africa as a whole, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) adopted the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) in 1981. This Charter is quite unique in that it recognizes the rights of communities and not only of individuals. This is an important step in bringing communities into the human rights discourse, which has otherwise been confined to individuals and states. However, the question remains to what extent such communities would be women inclusive and gender sensitive.

Following the Charter, with concerns that women in Africa continued to be victims of discrimination and harmful practices, the OAU adopted a Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2007. This Protocol called on states to 'eradicate elements in traditional beliefs, practices and stereotypes which legitimize and exacerbate the persistence and tolerance of violence against women' (Spence 2017: 161). The Protocol refers to harmful practices but identifies only one of them, namely female genital mutilation (FGM). There is no reference to either witchcraft or the persecution of women as witches.

There clearly is a tension between the pronouncements of the OAU and actions by African states. While the OAU instruments call for action to eradicate harmful practices, many African states have called for or taken action furthering witch persecutions. International pressures, including of human rights organizations, play their part in creating these tensions. The Charter and Protocols, limited as they might be, can nevertheless be used by women's groups and other NGOs and communities too in pushing the agenda of ending the persecution of women as witches.

While legal actions might be in the direction of deterring witch hunting, there are counter trends in the name of culture by persons in positions of authority. In Papua New Guinea the anti-witchcraft law (Sorcery Act of 1971) was repealed in 2013 (Spence 2017: 202). With the continuing witch hunts, a senior police officer was quoted as saying that there would be no more human rights abuses if they 'got rid of' all sorcerers (ibid.: 204). Both sides of the debate can use the human rights language. Those promoting witch hunts claim that the supposed depredations of witches are the human rights abuses, while those against witch hunts claim that the persecution of so-called witches are the relevant human rights abuses. In between, there is the question of the brutal attack on women (and some men) in the midst of

spiritual insecurity, largely increased by the socio-economic transformations that are underway in these countries.

In India there is no national-level legislation that penalizes witch hunting. A private member's bill was introduced in 2016 in the Parliament (Lok Sabha) to 'provide more effective measures to prevent and protect women from witch hunt practices', which is still pending consideration. The various provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1860 are still used to register offences and crimes. The different sections invoked in such cases are Section 302, which deals with murder; Section 307, attempt to murder; Section 323, hurt; Section 376, for rape; and Section 354, which deals with the curiously termed 'outraging the modesty of a woman'. The gendered nature of the crime of witch persecution is only brought out through charges in Section 376 for rape and Section 354 for sexual harassment of some kind.

However, some Indian states have come up with laws to specifically tackle the problem of witch hunting. Bihar was the first to pass the 'Prevention of Witch (Dayan) Practices Act' in 1999. Since this was the then-unified Bihar, it also applied to what is now Jharkhand. When the state of Jharkhand was formed, it passed its own 'Anti-Witchcraft Practices Act' in 2001. Sections 3, 4, 5, and 6 of this Act deal with punishment for denouncing a person as a witch and causing any damage to them.

The state of Chhattisgarh also passed the 'Chhattisgarh Toni Pratana' in 2005. *Toni* or *tonhi* is the local name for witch in Chhattisgarh, similar to *dayan* in most of Jharkhand and Odisha. The Chhattisgarh Act was passed after a civil society outcry for a law to prevent the persecution of so-called witches. All these laws make the identifying of a person as a witch a crime. Subsequently, the states of Rajasthan and Odisha also passed anti-witchcraft laws. All the laws specifically bring the witch finder (*ojha*) under the ambit of the law.

All of these Acts prescribe various types of punishment, including prison terms and fines, for labelling someone a witch, causing her harm, and so on. But the punishment in these Acts is actually less than in corresponding sections of the IPC. For instance, the Jharkhand Act prescribes a maximum sentence of four months simple imprisonment for causing 'physical and mental harm', which is lower than the sentence provided under the IPC.

At the same time, the first information report (FIR) filed with the local police is related to both state anti-witch persecution laws and IPC provisions. In the Partners for Law in Development (PLD) study (2014: 104), only 6 out of 53 cases were exclusively under state laws. In our investigation of Jashpur District of Chhattisgarh, out of 99 FIRs between 2008 and 2014, only 4 were exclusively on state law sections. In these cases, the IPC sections were used to deal with witch-related crimes. The PLD study also found

that of 85 FIRs, 72 involved physical violence. The PLD report points out that police intervention only takes place after there has been some physical violence, often after murder has been carried out, not in cases of persecution or harassment of women as witches (PLD 2014).

The existence of a law against witch persecution certainly serves to draw attention to the existence of the practice and the necessity of eradicating it. But, since the punishment provisions are quite weak, even less than those under corresponding sections of the IPC, it is doubtful if they serve as a deterrent. This is not an argument for stricter laws but meant to point out the inadequacy of dealing with witch persecution only as a legal matter. However, except for specific instances of violence, there is a general impunity with regard to the long-term consequences of witch hunt, such as ostracism or being driven out of the community or the village (ibid.).

Witch hunting is a gender-based form of violence that constitutes discrimination against women. The state's responsibility is not only to eschew government action of this type but also to prevent private action, such as causing fear through the threat of denouncing women as witches. The UN's Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women had noted in General Comment No. 19 that states have to take measures to eliminate private discrimination, and states may be held responsible for private acts 'if they fail to act with due diligence to prevent violation of rights or to investigate and punish acts of violence, and for providing compensation' (Cornell Law School 2014: 14).

India is signatory to a number of international covenants with serious implications for actions to deal with witch hunting. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1970) are foundational international documents of basic civil rights of women and men. CEDAW (1979) makes it binding on the various member states to eliminate all discrimination and cruelty against women. Section 5(a) requires states to take appropriate action to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, something which requires action against witch hunting.

Legally dealing with witch hunting is not only an obligation under state and national laws but also a constitutional requirement, and an obligation under various international covenants to which India is party. The Supreme Court of India has ruled that Article 51 of the Directive Principles of State Policy is 'fundamental to the governance of the country' and that states should apply these Principles, including respect 'for international law and treaty obligations' (Indian Constitution Article 51). The Supreme Court also ruled that the Indian Constitution must itself be interpreted in the light of India's international treaties and in conformity with international law (*Gramophone*

Company of India v. Birendra Bahadur Pandy, 1984, SCR [2] 664, quoted in Cornell Law School 2014).

When India is a signatory to an international treaty, there is a general requirement that Indian law be made consonant with the international obligations. But the above-mentioned Supreme Court decision ruled that '… rules of international law may be accommodated in the municipal law even without express legislative sanction provided they do not run into conflict with Acts of Parliament' (Cornell Law School 2014). In yet another case (*Visakha v. State of Rajasthan*), the Supreme Court took the doctrine of international obligations even further. '… [it] is now an accepted rule of judicial construction that regard must be had to international conventions and norms for constructing domestic law when there is no inconsistency between them and there is a void in the domestic law' (Cornell Law School 2014: fn. 8).

The UNHCR Committee in its General Comment No. 4 also held that the obligation required not only measures of prevention but also of affirmative action to enable positive enjoyment of rights. Among many measures proposed, the UNHCR Committee asked for compilation of statistics, and effective measures to overcome customs, attitudes, and practices that support gender-based violence. In addition to the CEDAW Committee and the UNHCR, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women also called attention to the problem of witch violence against women in India in 2002 (Cornell Law School 2014: 15, 18). The Special Rapporteur in the 2012 Report concluded that the main problem in India is impunity (Spence 2017: 82). The lax legal actions, as also noted by the Ralushai Commission in South Africa, do not serve as a deterrent to witch accusations and persecutions.

Thus, the Indian state (including both central and state governments, administrations, and the judicial system) could be held accountable if due diligence is not observed in investigating and punishing acts of witch hunting.

Police and administration

We take the police and administration together since it is their task to implement the laws and provide protection to those who are under threat of their human rights being violated. The police are the first officials of the state whom the victims and their families approach, either on apprehending danger or after the event. But it should be noted that one quasi-official who often seems to be the first person to be approached is the village woman running the Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) centre or *anganwadi* (crèche). That the ICDS worker, called Asha, is the

first person to be approached is something to be kept in mind in devising official intervention. Of course, the ICDS worker is a local person from the community concerned and thus would be subject to all the pressures and prejudices of a community member.

In both Odisha and Chhattisgarh, in most cases, there seems to be a high incidence of victims or their relatives approaching the police. This is somewhat different from the case of Jharkhand, where the incidence of approaching the police is somewhat lower (Nathan, Kelkar, and Satija 2016). At one level, there is a substantial alienation of indigenous peoples in India from the police and administration. However, there are many pressures from the community to not approach the police (PLD 2012: 7). Such pressures are likely to be exerted in all such areas, but it seems to be more effective in Jharkhand than in the other states. Of course, it could also be that in Jharkhand, compared to Chhattisgarh and Odisha, the alleged witches and their families are themselves less inclined to approach the police, believing that these are internal matters that should be settled within the community.

The police too seem to take a similar attitude. Where there is not a murder involved, they suggest a compromise. As pointed out in PLD (2012: 8), it is not only in community forums that compromises are suggested or arrived at, but also at the police stations. Until a murder takes place, this seems to be the preferred option of the police. In our 10 Odisha case studies, there was some form of state intervention. In 6 of them there was a murder, which would mean that the police had to register a case of serious crime. But in the other 4 cases, the police intervened to file FIRs or visited the village on the basis of complaints under the FIRs. But discussions with officials involved in these cases in both Odisha and Chhattisgarh revealed that officials did not expect much effective action from the state. They pointed out that in most cases people did not approach the police to file complaints. In other cases, they mentioned, witnesses turn hostile and do not testify in court.

Discussions with the police and other officials reveal that the police and administration consider witch persecution a matter of 'tribal' belief. But such an understanding should not militate against official action on receiving complaints of harassment, abuse, or sexual violence. Many officials themselves harbour these beliefs. For instance, at a meeting in Nandurbar in Maharashtra, the Deputy Collector was reported to have made a 10-minute speech on who is a witch, her appearance, what she does, and so on. With such beliefs being held by the officials whose job it is to protect the victims whose rights have been violated, it should come as no surprise that police are found to 'lack the will to implement the laws and undertake vigorous investigation' (PLD 2012: 6).

Accusations

Indian laws make the accusation of witchcraft illegal. Such provisions exist in other countries too, such as South Africa. In a case in Malawi, the accused woman was cleared of the charge of practising witchcraft. But the very accusation and the case had led to such a toxic atmosphere in her place of work that, despite being cleared of the charge, she had to leave her place of employment and shift to another town (Ashforth 2015).

In many cases in India, witch hunt survivors have been forced to live as outcasts. During our fieldwork in Jharkahnd, we met 13 women and 1 man who had tearful stories of having had to leave all their belongings and run away at night to the shelter, about 12 to 26 kilometres away, run by the NGO Aasha. However, there was also a case from Jharkhand, India, where a woman who was being charged with witchcraft went to the witch finder (*ojha*) and threatened to take him to court if he declared her a witch. This threat of legal action worked and the *ojha* did not declare her a witch.

As argued in detail in Stewart and Strathern (2004), the charge of being a witch depends on rumours and gossip to gain currency. When the witch finder is brought in to identify the so-called witch, the identity of the woman to be so charged is well known in the community. And, of course, the charges do not require any legal foundation to be believed within the community. And, as seen earlier in the case from Malawi, even judicial clearing of the charge may not matter within the community. However, making an allegation of being a witch is a matter that can be taken to court and could be used as a deterrent to stop witch accusations.

Role of witch finders

Our field investigations have shown that witch accusations depend crucially on the witch finders (*ojha*s). There is, of course, the conflict leading to the witch accusation, or the identification of persons with whom the aggrieved person is in conflict. There is also the role of rumour and innuendo in targeting a particular woman. But, finally, it is the witch finder who is called upon to identify the alleged witch. In our discussions in the field sites, survivors and others have often centred on the necessity of curbing the power of the witch finders.

The Ralushai Commission also found the *inyanga*, the witch finder and also the traditional healer, as the key person in the whole witch persecution complex, who triggered 'the popular frenzy about the proliferation of witchcraft' (Geschiere 2006: 229). The 'comrades' sought the help of witch finders in identifying the so-called witches to be exterminated.

This points to the possibility for legislation to make illegal the so-called witch-finding activities of *ojha*s, while allowing them to continue with their herbal and other healing functions, as is done by the law in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe it is a crime 'to name or indicate any person as a wizard or witch' (ibid.: 234). Votaries of the actual existence of witchcraft would object that this starts the process with a denial of witchcraft. Further, a witch-finding practice is to be ended. As the Ralushai Commission pointed out, there needs to be a way in which the witch finders are brought into the legal process. They can be herbal or even faith healers but not witch finders.

Legal processes by themselves, however, cannot resolve the key issue of spiritual insecurity, connecting with economic insecurity the belief that witchcraft exists. There are a number of measures that could be undertaken to reduce spiritual insecurity of both the alleged witches and their accusers. Policy must recognize that indigenous peoples in many parts of the world and countries of sub-Saharan Africa are going through a difficult and massive or structural transformation. The proactive actions of both the state and civil society are needed to combine the structural with a human rights–based approach for the subalterns, the most subaltern being the women who live in fear of being denounced as witches and driven out of the community or lose their lives in inhuman, brutalized ways.

Structural transformation and spiritual crisis

Some of the key structural capitalist transformations connected with witch hunts are: (*a*) the move from land as collective property of the lineage or village to its individualization, (*b*) the shift from production for subsistence to production for the market, or commodity production, (*c*) the move from redistributing surpluses in reciprocity systems or potlatch ways of consuming surpluses to individual household based savings and accumulation, and (*d*) the alienation of producers from their means of production through both internal differentiation and state enclosure. A growth of inequality accompanies these changes in what were relatively egalitarian societies. Above all, there is the uncertainty of the economic situation; what was relatively stable, such as one's access to land or forest, could all be lost. At the same time, some could make fortunes. The question of changes, as is said to have happened in the case of post-Apartheid South Africa, is no longer 'Why are Whites rich and Blacks poor?' but 'Why are some Blacks rich and others not?' Ashforth notes, 'Nothing in the indigenous political or social tradition of this country offers guidance for interpreting the meaning of economic inequality among black people, particularly now that Africans are dominant' (2004: 93).

These socio-economic transformations are also gendered processes, continuing the targeting of women as witches. We cannot get a better summary of the gendered nature of the transformation currently under way in Africa than the following by Achille Mbembe (2006: 326). He points out: 'Among the most diminished categories of social relationships is the status of "head of the family," generally held by men, which has declined especially starkly in places where the power to provide can no longer be exercised.' Only a few can move up and take advantage of mobility, and women have played an influential role in these processes, challenging masculine prerogatives.

Mbembe does not link his analysis with the pervasive witch hunts in Africa, but our examples from both African countries and India show that witch accusations have accompanied women's increased economic role and assertion. With women's greater involvement in the massive unorganized sectors in these economies, there is a greater economic emergence and role for women. The analysis above has a strong resonance with Larner's for early modern Europe. Of course, Larner goes on to hold that the demand for ideological conformity was broader than this one aspect of conformity to patriarchal gender roles. But that does not rule out the relevance of her own argument.

Three major points emerge from the summary of the structural transformations given above. First is that states in these nations and regions need to institute universal forms of social security. Rather than carrying on witch hunting to oppose the morality of accumulation, as Harri Englund (1996) terms it, a better option would be to require states to develop new forms of social security. This requires accepting that the economic context has changed from a non-accumulative to an accumulative economy and not sticking to the position that there is nothing new in the current economic transformation.

Social security expenditures are generally considered deductions from productive investments. But provision for education, health, and nutrition are productivity enhancing, as argued by Peter Lindert (2004) among others. In our analysis, we have referred to Alan Macfarlane's finding that in Essex witch hunts were more widespread where enclosure had taken place compared to areas where enclosures had not taken place, and also our own conjecture that a more broad-based social security system in England, combining earlier parish-based security with Elizabethean Poor Laws, probably led to less intense witch hunting in England compared to continental Europe.

The second point is that in a market-based economy, kinship-based social security systems have a high cost in terms of their disincentive effects on work and investment (Platteau 1991: 161). All the accounts of urban employees fearing to return to their villages on retirement demonstrate the

loss to the villages. Living in Delhi we have seen the tensions faced by the young women from indigenous communities of Jharkhand as they try to juggle the incessant demands from their rural families and their attempts to be careful in how they spend their money and also hide their savings.

The third is that jealousy from such inequalities is a big factor in witch hunts. The Bakweri example in Cameroon of commercial cultivation is a good example of both the jealousies of unequal growth and how one could deal with them. When commercial cultivation was taken up individually, there was an increase in witchcraft accusations. These, however, died down when a cooperative was formed and the whole village shared in the benefits of commercial cultivation (Ardener 1970).

The fear of inequality destroying the community through jealousy can also lead to giving up opportunities for economic advancement. We were once involved in a savings and credit group among the former gatherer-hunters, the Chenchu, in the state of Telangana. The women were prompt in their savings and used their accumulated savings for new needs such as children's school fees. But they studiously avoided taking any loans. When asked whether they feared the risk of suffering a loss in a micro-enterprise, such as a shop in the large market of the temple, they replied that they were certain that a shop in a temple centre of the village would do well. But, they maintained, there was not enough capital for each of them to start a shop. On raising the question about the possibility of a cooperative venture with the capital available, they said no; that would lead to quarrels among us. We would carry out only individual enterprises, but each one of us should be able to start one. They valued equality over benefiting from economic opportunities.

This is an extreme form of the value of equality. But others too express similar sentiments. One of the Waorani of Ecuador, recently in the news for winning their case to prevent the auction of their forest lands, is reported saying, 'No one must have what I do not have' (Robarcheck and Robarcheck 2005), with the jealousy from some having more at times reflected in witch killing.

Efforts at cooperative collectivity

There are numerous examples of cooperative enterprises run by indigenous peoples around the world. Some of them in Yunnan, China, are there to regulate their participation in tourism (Yang et al. 2016). In India, Nagas in the Angami village of Khonoma and the Ao village of Mopungchuket have also set up cooperative enterprises to run a tourism and organic produce ventures respectively (Nathan et al. 2012: 197). These are the 'Ethnicity, Inc' to which the Comaroffs refer (2004: 191). They are, of course, business enterprises operating in the market system, but their internal organization is

that of cooperatives with some sharing of returns. More complex collective villages operating in the capitalist market system also exist in China, as analysed in Nathan and Kelkar (1997). These are not alternatives to capitalism, but they are alternatives in capitalism, alternatives that could give some space for the relative equality that many communities cherish, while accumulating to increase their income.

In discussing policy to reduce spiritual insecurity, it must be recognized that around the world, and certainly among indigenous peoples in India, aspirations have changed. In our over 30 years of going among indigenous peoples, we have seen major changes in their approach to education, wage labour, and so on. Some are the product of necessity, like that of performing wage labour in order to survive. Others, however, are the result of changed aspirations, such as that of the Chenchu woman who said that she did not want her daughter to be illiterate as she was. Aspirations for education, medical services, television for entertainment, and mobile phone for communication, all this may have changed. But, as Appadurai points out, it is not enough for aspirations to change; it is also necessary that their capacity to aspire, that is, to meet their aspirations, also change (2004). This requires a combination of both increased income and state support. A different type of growth, one that is substantially less unequalizing, could help to reduce the spiritual insecurity leading to witch hunts.

A cooperative or collective village enterprise(s) could deal with a level of alienation at the local level. Members could see the direct connection between enterprise performance and their own well-being. Because of the small scale both in population and geography, forms of direct democracy could also work quite well. Women, who are generally excluded from indigenous political forums, including the village assembly, could also be full members of the collective. However, what is sketched here is not an alternative to capitalism or to the generalized market economy. For that, some more, in fact, a lot more, imagination is required.

A cooperative enterprise or a collective village, though operating in the market system, could help recreate what has been called 'the foundational principle of African humanism'—Ubuntu, that 'a person is a person through other people' (Ashforth 2005: 85). Villages are on a small scale and allow for reasonable face-to-face interaction. This could be a start in moving from the crass individualism of capitalist modernity to a more humane and gender-responsive market economy.

That people are people through other people is part of critical Marxist theory. Gramsci asked for a reformation of the concept of the individual and of the group too.[1] He moved from the obvious 'Our capacity to think

[1] This paragraph is derived from Hartsock (1997).

and act on the world is dependent on other people who are themselves also subjects and objects of history' (Gramsci 1971: 346) to ask for a reform of the concept of the individual to see a person as a 'series of active relationships'. The individual then is the 'ensemble of those relations … To create one's personality means to acquire consciousness of them and to modify one's own personality means to modify the ensemble of those relations …' (ibid.: 352). Such a reformulation of the individual as an individual through relationships with others resonates with the African philosophy of Ubuntu, or what Nyamnjoh calls conviviality (2017), which, among other things, requires that one acknowledge that 'being and becoming is an eternal process of incompleteness' (ibid.: 259). In the process of advancing in becoming, it is necessary to recognize that agency plays a part, and that too in changing one's relationships with others; for instance, the relationship of women with men, with whom they are in subordinated relationships, even if they are convivial relationships. Thus, these relations, however intimate they may be, need to be changed with both legal- and community-based actions to those with dignity and equality in the right to resources and decision-making.

Consequently, the interaction of the individual with the group (other people) is not simply from the group to the individual. It is also from the individual to the group. Where non-conforming actions and ideas are denounced, and those taking the initiative likely to face demonization as witches, then the ability of the group itself to deal with change would be restricted, even negated. Consequently, while stressing the importance of 'other peoples', one should also accept the necessity of two-way individual-group dynamics in incorporating and dealing with change.

Further, it is not just the relationship of the individual to the group that is relevant here. Groups too are not monolithic; they contain sub-groups, such as women and men, or different classes. These sub-groups also lead to tensions in the working of groups. It is necessary to recognize all these struggles and rights of individuals and sub-groups within groups to deal with the application of the concept of people as constituted within groups to deal with situations of change. Otherwise, one would end up justifying the repression of individuals and sub-groups who strive for change.

Redefining masculinity

Most analyses of patriarchy, including ours, deal with the manner in which gender roles and hierarchies are established. The role of knowledge, the formation of property, and gender roles in politics are some of the areas of analysis. But what about the question of masculinity? To complete the picture we really need to take up the formation of patriarchal masculinity. In the

question of witch hunts, where the perpetrators are men and the accused are mainly women, should we not take up the question of the type of masculinity that can perpetrate such acts?

In the killing and persecutions of witches, there is an often unspeakable cruelty, as Carol Karlsen puts it (1987), referring to the vindictiveness and viciousness with which the women were treated. What accounts for this viciousness? Is this the result of a toxic masculinity? We will not go into these questions here; that would require another book in itself. But when discussing ways of dealing with witch hunts, it is necessary to point to the need to change the patriarchal concepts of masculinity.

The book *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (Rowlands 2009) looks at the masculinity of the men who were alleged witches. It, however, is necessary to go into the masculinity of the men who carry out the torture, execution, and other persecutions of women alleged to be witches. This requires a broader study of the way in which toxic masculinity is formed. So far, we know of studies of masculinity in India by Sanjay Srivastava (2010) in the context of gender-based violence in public spaces; otherwise, this seems a neglected topic.

Misogyny in social norms and individual attitudes is a critical part of patriarchy. Eliminating witch hunts requires dealing with this misogyny and creating a new kind of masculinity. Mbembe points to the challenge to the picture of man as 'head of the family' by women's importance in the economic sphere. The new masculinity needs to recognize that concepts such as 'head of the family' have lost their relevance in the contemporary world, whether in India, Africa, or anywhere else in the world. This is a big challenge, and we mention it here as something that needs to be taken up. There needs to be a change in the mindset and imagination of men (and women as well) to stop them from seeing women as economically or otherwise dependent on men and from attempts at robbing them of their resources by identifying the most vulnerable among them as witches.

Human rights and cultural relativism

The only way to resolve the dilemma of cultural relativism is to bring human rights into the discussion, something that is conspicuous by its absence in much of the academic witchcraft discourse. Bringing the ethics of human rights into the discourse on witch hunts and related cultures is a responsibility of social scientists, or, as Gayatri Spivak puts it, one must 'suture' the human rights discourse to a notion of responsibility (Cornell 2010).

Practices that have been considered ethical at one time may cease to be ethical at another time. Cultures, in most cases, are patriarchal cultures and

have practices that we now consider as violations of human rights, such as that of the treatment of single and widowed women in India. In indigenous communities they are often declared as witches and deprived of subsistence resources, such as land in close kinship groups. Women's resistance in such cases is met with collective and community efforts to drive them out of their villages or kill them as 'witches'.

These ethical positions evolve over time and are influenced by different forms of power and different discourses. The power could be that of dominating or colonial powers; it is also the power of those who internally dominate the group or society that we are dealing with. It is also the power of feminist struggles and discourses over power for women. The indigenous peoples may be subaltern in relation to the ruling powers of the states within which they are enclosed. But at the same time, many indigenous societies contain forms of patriarchy. This would turn these women into the subaltern of the subaltern.

The capitalist system is fashioned on a two-level basis—that of the nation-state and market and that of the individual. The intermediate communities to which individuals belong are left out of the analysis, as recently argued by Raghuram Rajan (2018). Similarly, at the level of human rights, it is necessary to recognize the rights of individuals and communities and sub-groups, more importantly women, within them. Whether it is those accused of being witches or those who believe in witchcraft, all have human rights. But their belief does not give them the right to ostracize, persecute, torture, and kill any women or men whom they consider as practitioners of witchcraft.

At times human rights may be placed against culture, but, as we understand from Kwame Appiah (2005), ethics trumps culture or identity. One cannot argue for the preservation of certain cultural practices that violate accepted human rights on the basis that accepting such human rights would violate these cultures. Community groups of particular cultures may prescribe norms, such as of sharing of resources, which go beyond legal requirements. But such community groups cannot be accepted to continue to enforce norms that violate accepted human rights of individual women and men who constitute these communities.

As against the argument that human rights standards are a Euro-American imposition, one should point out that many human rights instruments have been the result of advocacy by women's movements and subaltern groups around the world, including the Global South. The UN's resolution on the rights of indigenous peoples is one such international human rights instrument that resulted from years and decades of campaigning by indigenous peoples around the world, including indigenous peoples in North America and in Asia. As pointed out earlier, the OAU declaration makes a departure from

other such declarations by bringing communities into the ambit of discussion. There is still a Euro-American or Global North domination, but the space for others from the Global South has also increased. It is not a world of 'ever-diminishing opportunities'.

Mitigating circumstances of justice

In Indian courts, belief in witchcraft has sometimes been treated as a mitigating circumstance in cases of witch hunts. A recent verdict (October 2018) of the Calcutta High Court said that when witch hunting is in the psyche of the perpetrators, it does not help to judicially execute them. Holding that the perpetrators could be reformed, the sentence was commuted from execution to imprisonment. At the same time, we would not support the continuation of barbaric death sentences. Their commutation may not be a matter of cultural justice, more as a pragmatic way of reducing tensions. In Africa too, courts have reduced sentences on the grounds of the perpetrators' belief in witchcraft. The Comaroffs refer to courts in South Africa reducing sentences (2004).

The use of beliefs as a mitigating circumstance is an attempt to bridge the gap between what can be seen as Euromodern (the term is that of the Comaroffs) one law system and the different cultural ideas of justice. Of course, the cultural ideas of justice may not all be uniform. Survivors of witch hunts may have a different idea of cultural justice from the perpetrators of witch hunts. Nevertheless, such reductions of sentences could be an attempt to reconcile these two very different notions of justice. One notion is based on the uniform legal system, and the other on varied cultural ideas of justice.

It is necessary to be careful with the use of culture or belief as a mitigating circumstance. Do all cultural beliefs have equal validity as mitigating circumstances? What about the cases of so-called honour killings involving the murder of persons who get married against the traditional norms of their communities? In such cases, can the belief of the perpetrators that the victims had brought their family or families into disrepute—and possibly even made it difficult for the survivors to continue social intercourse with their fellow community members—be used to argue for a reduction of sentences? It would be difficult to argue that in all cases of killings based on the beliefs of particular cultures, these beliefs should be accepted as mitigating circumstances. That, of course, is the problem of cultural relativism.

Given the spiritual insecurity that surrounds contemporary transitions in regions we are looking at, some sort of community mechanism may help to reduce the intra-community tensions that are at the heart of witch hunts. The South African Commission on Gender Equality also called for a manner of

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, such as was convened after the end of Apartheid.

> Thousands of victims of witchcraft violence have been displaced from their homes and have suffered losses and damages to their property. Such victims have often lived with the terrible burden of their memories, without having had the opportunity to be counselled. On the other hand, many perpetrators are living with their guilt. They are looking for ways to come forward and seek forgiveness. We call on the government, religious leaders, traditional leaders, independent bodies, and NGOs to find ways of reuniting communities which have been divided by witchcraft violence, drawing on the experiences and method of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (1998: 328–9)

A forum of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission type could help bring out into the open the tensions in the community. In some of our case studies, village council or village assembly and NGO interventions have helped diffuse tensions and end particular witch accusations. There surely is a role for such community and supra-community interventions that promote discussions and resolve tensions.

The various manifestations of jealousy may also come out. Can village or locality councils or assemblies play this part? They could, but that would require changes for women and other likely targets of witch hunts to come out with their stories and fears. Those who fear these persons as causing harm would also have to come out with their fears and jealousies. Such a process would be of help if they could also point the way to the socio-economic processes involved in the misfortunes that afflict various persons. They may help move attention away from supernatural to more mundane explanations. Why, for instance, do people with at least secondary education do better than those with little education? Does that help understand the extent of inequality within a community? Why are men unable to accept that women may earn more than they do and that women may want to be an equal part of household and community decision-making? These are just a few points. The simple idea is that a truth and reconciliation type of forum can be a way of defusing tensions, and creating new forms of masculinity inclined to recognize women's equality and dignity in life. It can complement the type of universal social security and safety measures as possible aids in reducing witchcraft suspicions and witch hunts.

Jealousy, as George Foster (1972) points out, is a universal feature of human society, as 'good things' are scarce and unevenly distributed. What differs from one society to another is the way in which jealousy is dealt with. Witch hunts are one way of dealing with jealousy. Can one design other ways of dealing with jealousy?

One might say that jealousy is an indicator of inequality. This inequality could take more than one form. It could be inequality between those who have been equal, such as between brothers and their families in the indigenous villages in India or Africa. It could also be inequality between those who are accepted to be unequal, such as between men and women in most Asian and African societies. This type of inequality in feminist analysis, including feminist economic analysis, raises the question about men's roles as decision makers and owners of land and property within the family and outside in the wider society. While some policy efforts are being attempted to change this gender inequality, social norms and cultural beliefs have come up as major barriers. These in turn result in little progress on women's secondary and dependent socio-economic position. At the micro level, it could well be that anyone getting a little better than her peers is looked on with suspicion. It is the morality and reality of unequal accumulation and vastly uneven distribution of material resources and decision-making in male hands, as the heads of households, which is the base of this jealousy.

The absence of norms-based equality for women and girls and of the state-provided measures for women's unmediated right to productive assets and property means that the vast majority of rural and indigenous women depend on ties to family and kinship for security. They exist in the risk-prone situation of fear and violence, as well as the threat of eviction from the household and community. Would the effective policies for a social security system, based on women's unmediated ownership of land and property and social security for all, help to reduce their existence under the threat of being denounced as witches or being killed for any transgression of the community norms? We cannot be sure of that, but it could help to strengthen women's agency and social position; they would be less likely to be denounced as witches in the family and kinship groups, as we saw in the case of Hari Bai of Bhilwara of Rajasthan, who was able to fight an entire village, retain her right to house and land, and emerge as the hero in the area (see Chapter 3 for details on Hari Bai).

New ways of thinking

New methods of thinking are not 'a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but of renovating and making "critical" an already existing activity' (Gramsci 1971: 330). People around the world have various forms of scientific attitudes and approaches. This is manifested in successful production activities. Without such scientific attitudes, such as that of looking for evidence, people would not survive. The very fact of survival means that they have some scientific attitude towards

producing from nature. What then is needed is to extend these already existing modes of thought into other areas, such as that about the supernatural and causing harm.

Such an extension is possible since, whether in India or in indigenous and rural areas around the world, the witchcraft ideology is surely not the only representation of social relations that exist. The non-witchcraft representations also exist and can be taken up in contestation with the witchcraft representation.

How new ways of thinking that are not based on witchcraft beliefs develop and spread can be seen with reference to 'cholera witches' (Macdonald 2004: 22–3). In the nineteenth century in what is now the state of Chhattisgarh in India, cholera was thought to be caused by witches. Over time, people in the area have come to understand that cholera is related to dirty water, while the knowledge of oral rehydration has also spread as a way of treating cholera so that it does not lead to death. Witchcraft beliefs have not ended with this knowledge about cholera, but there are no more 'cholera witches'. However, accusations have taken on other forms. What is important is that a domain of witchcraft beliefs has withered away. As knowledge of other debilitating diseases and of their treatment spreads, we would expect that the areas of health and other social experiences that are now explained in terms of witchcraft would be reduced. Similarly, as people come to understand the inherent risks and dangers of a market economy, their attribution of economic misfortune or inequality to malign personal jealousies could also be reduced as they come to understand the broader class and gender forces, national and global, at play.

Witch accusations have tended to reduce in areas or periods where market-based relations are well established, as compared to times or regions where reciprocity and market systems are both in existence and conflict. People then begin to accept the new relations as normal and seek new ways of security and well-being. The role of the state in providing assets and resource-based equality to indigenous and rural women, and overall social security, safety, and dignity become crucial in the attempt to overcome witch hunts. Most important, however, is the creation of non-patriarchal masculinities, through policy and practice that pay attention to transforming misogyny in social norms and attitudes.

Glossary

aberewa	wise old woman, who is denounced as a witch by relatives in Ashanti society
Adivasi	indigenous people, term used in India
akodaa	an ill-mannered child in Ashanti society of Ghana
anganwadi sevika	a village school worker, prepares mid-day meal for school children, in India
anyen	elderly woman regarded as witch, among Ashanti people in Ghana
aze	witch substance said to be found in the vagina of women, who are therefore denounced as witches among Fon people, in Benin
azexewe	childless elderly widowed woman, in Benin
bayi	witchcraft belief about an elderly woman, used in Ashanti society of Ghana
bayifoo	elderly woman regarded as witch, among Ashanti people in Ghana
bhagat	priest, in rural India, forbidden to women
bhitri	an internal shrine, among Santhal and Munda peoples of India
bhutali	witch, used among Warli (indigenous people), in western India

bisahi	the keeper of poison, a term used for witches in Oraon community in Bangladesh and India
bobolizan	woman spiritual leader, also a village head, in earlier times, among Rungus indigenous peoples of Sabah, Malaysia
bonga	the clan spirit, a supernatural being, generally invoked by the 'witches' in Jharkhand, India
chau pu xi	the keeper of evil spirits, used in Yunnan, China
dakhini	witch, originally a deity in central India
dalit	literal meaning: 'the oppressed', used for the (formerly) 'Untouchable' caste
dargah	Islamic shrine (Urdu, India)
dayaan	witch, used in Jharkhand
djambe	witch substance which enters the body of a woman, and is said to have spread among men too through contact, in Cameroon
dona	leaf cup (Hindi, northern India)
dongba	male priest who played a key role in identifying whether a woman was a witch, among the Naxi indigenous people in China
dorbar	the village governing body among Khasi peoples in northeast India
dosimani mud aka kapda	the clothes of a guilty person, among Oraon people in Jharkhand
gram panchayat	village council, in India
hisinga	jealousy (Munda language, Jharkhand)
hul	rebellion, used in Santhal language in Jharkhand
inona	envy or jealously, used in east Cameroon
inyaga	witch finder and traditional healer, in South Africa
izzat	dignity/honour, used in terms of sexual purity (Hindi and Urdu, India)
jaher	sacred grove, where women are not allowed to enter (India)
jajmani	hereditary service or patron–client relations (Hindi, India)

jalan	jealousy (Hindi)
khlem	the serpent who feeds on human blood in Khasi society in northeast India
les forces du mal	the forces of evil
mahila samakhya	rural women's organizations in northern India
manji-than	shrine of village ancestors, among Santhal people in India
maulvi	Muslim priest (Hindi and Urdu, India)
mfiti	witches who feast on human flesh, in the context of South Africa
mlechha	literal meaning: 'unclean, barbarian people', used for indigenous peoples in India circa 600 CE
murodi	a person who 'possesses evil powers with the aim to harm others', used in Namibia
muti	mysterious substance related to witchcraft, caused by jealousy, in Soweto
Natt	A traditional community (tribe) of rope dancers/ entertainers, in north India
necklacing	where a burning tire is placed on a person who is considered a witch (usually a woman's neck) in Cameroon and South Africa
nyongo	a virulent form of witchcraft, used in east Cameroon
obayifoo	elderly woman regarded as witch, among Ashanti people in Ghana
ojha	witch finder and faith healer in Jharkhand, India
Pagu porob	hunting ritual during spring among Santhal indigenous people in India
panchayat	village council in India
*panch*es	members of the village council, used in India
parmanik	the village official who sees to the farming arrangement amongst the Santhal in India
phi ka	a kind of spirit of witchcraft in Yunnan, China

phii paub	spirit of witchcraft, among Isan indigenous people, in northeastern Thailand
phuxi	ghost/witchcraft; practised only by women, among Naxi people, in Yunnan, China
pippa	tiger spirit belief, used in Dai indigenous peoples in China
pippa/phi ka	possessors of the evil tiger spirit, close to the concept of witchcraft, used in Yunnan, China
Rajput	warrior, upper caste, in India
Sarhul	indigenous spring festival (local dialects in Jharkhand)
Sarna	an indigenous nature worship religion, in Jharkhand, India.
Sarna community	community of nature worshippers, in Jharkhand, India
sarpanch	elected head of the village council, in India
Singbonga	supreme being in Santhal society of indigenous peoples in India
tohni	witch, used in central India
Ubuntu	part of African philosophy which sees an individual through a relationship with others
Ujamaa	a village-based socialist programme in Tanzania
ulgulan	rebellion, used in Munda language in Jharkhand
urodi	dangerous like a poison, used in Namibia
Yemoja	fertility goddess, and also the mother of all witches, in Nigeria

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